

# RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

### THE EARLIER PLAY

#### 1. MIRACLE AND MORALITY

*Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, are plays of early date and great intrinsic merit. Have they a further distinction — are they the first “regular” English comedy and tragedy? What is their place in the history of the drama?

From the earliest times among the English people the impulse to dramatic expression — which is universal — took form in folk-dances, folk-games, folk-plays; some have remained even to our own day. Such primitive forms of the play may, as among the Greeks, develop into a regular drama, but only tardily, without orderly progress or continuity, with long deferral of an awakening of conscious art. To insure continuity, to hasten progress, some external agency must give the play more assured social standing and dignity. Tragedy outstripped comedy among the Greeks because its presentation was a religious ceremonial; in medieval Europe, the Church, the central social institution of the Middle Ages, at once democratic and aristocratic, though it had repressed and brought to an end the Roman drama, itself later, by using drama to enrich its services and enforce its teaching, provided the starting-point for a new development. In the liturgical play — at first merely a brief action, with a word or two of dialogue, inserted in the liturgy of special festivals — the miracle or religious play, presenting events from the Bible or the lives of saints, took rise. In time, the play-

ing of the miracles was transferred without the church-building, and into the control of trade-guilds and municipal authority. Elaborated cycles of plays, covering Bible narrative and prophecy, from the Fall of the Angels to the Day of Judgment, were acted by tradesmen and artisans. The religious play became in a complete sense the possession of the people and was thereby assured vitality. It possessed a recognized social status and function, and was thereby insured the necessary continuity for orderly and relatively rapid development. While truly popular, it was never disconnected from the Church, and the possibility of being improved and adapted to new aims. Popular influence within the miracle made characterization and dialogue realistic, and, with most important bearing on future artistic development, educed the element of humor. But it was the Church, it was a learned, indeed, in a measure a literary, influence, which called into existence a new type of play, the morality, that is a moral allegory in dramatic form. In this new type, the didactic purpose for which the drama ostensibly existed, which had become materially weakened in the popular miracle, was, in a most interesting way, reaffirmed and intensified. None the less, through substitution of human life and conduct in the abstract in the place of Bible story and saint's legend, the use of allegory, as it does always, led in time to criticism of contemporary conditions, to controversy and satire, and a long step was taken toward the use of other than religious and moral themes.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE INTERLUDE

Side by side with the morality appears a second new type of play, the interlude. While the morality reaffirmed the didactic purpose of the religious play, the interlude represents departure from it in the direction of greater freedom.

<sup>1</sup> See for a more extended outline, with detailed references, *Early Plays* in this series, number 191. The most important reference for the early drama is *The Mediæval Play*, of E. K. Chambers; for the general development of the drama, and the lines of influence extending into it from the early drama, the *Elizabethan Drama*, of F. E. Schelling.

A view formerly held, supported or inferred from an assumed etymology of the word, found the origin of the interlude in definitely humorous scenes, non-religious in subject, inserted between the serious scenes of the miracle. Another view, more near the truth, saw in the interlude a play given for entertainment between the close of a banquet and the parting cup. Mr. Chambers's surmise is probably nearer the truth, that the word means simply a dialogue between several persons. It is clear that the term was applied alike to plays indistinguishable in substance and method from miracle and morality and plays purely secular in theme. It is also equally clear that the term implies that a play in question was given more or less confessedly for simple enjoyment. This fact is of great importance when the question of the origin of the interlude, in its later specific sense, is considered.

Several factors enter into the development. Apart from the stated presentations of the cycles of miracles in the towns, separate miracles and moralities might be given upon festival occasions in town and country. These presentations might be purely local, or local resources eked out by the engagement of players from other places, or, indeed, an entire company. This led to amateur actors of the town assuming in some sort a professional capacity. With a growing appreciation of the possibilities of the play as a means of enjoyment came a transfer of miracle and morality to places, occasions, and circumstances of presentation unknown to them at first — to the manor-hall, the guild-hall, even the tavern. The miracle and morality were necessarily conformed to suit their new purpose and circumstances of presentation. They were shortened, their dramatic interest intensified, their specifically humorous and other entertaining features amplified. Other than religious themes began to be used. Here an influence came in from the various forms of dramatic or quasi-dramatic activity which were not religious — the folk-games, folk-plays, puppet-shows, mummings, disguisings, pageants; the spirit and influence of these must be reckoned with as affecting the religious play in its new surroundings. Again, and

this factor is one of great importance, the popularity of the play began seriously to interfere with the vogue of the professional minstrel, and his humbler brethren, the acrobat, juggler, performer of legerdemain, exhibitor of trained animals. The minstrels tried at first to have the giving of plays by amateurs restrained, but eventually many yielded to the inevitable and themselves turned players, so that at the close of the fifteenth century bodies of professional players are known to have existed who played under the protection and patronage of great nobles.

Whatever the plays used — and any plays would be used that suited, whether transformed miracle, morality, or folk-play, or old stories revamped in dramatic form — with the didactic purpose subordinated, with ever increasing freedom in choice of theme and treatment, the way to artistic development lay open, though that was not to be reached till far in the future. Here an important question at once presents itself. How early were there interludes on themes not religious and moral?

Evidence is scanty until a comparatively late date, but it is a moral certainty that the secular interlude had established itself as a recognized source of entertainment in the fourteenth century, perhaps even the thirteenth. It need hardly be pointed out that from the earliest times the folk-plays must have been given in the local manor, even as they have continued to be given to our own day; there was more to this than condescension or a willingness to enter into the pleasures of retainers and tenantry; here may be recalled Sir John Paston's expression of regret at parting with a servant because he acted so well in the Robin Hood plays. We must also take into account the general interest in pageants and mummings, the possibility of plays in improvised dumb-show or dialogue; there is no reason why such an obvious source of amusement should have been reserved only for special occasions. What is of more concern, however, than this attractive possibility is the question at what time the minstrel made use of the dramatic form; began, in place of a narrative in monologue, to tell the story in dialogue form, either acting all the

characters himself or presenting it in company with others, even with the use of costume.

Scanty though the evidence may appear, it is sufficient to carry the presentation of interludes by the minstrel much farther back than is usually apprehended or kept in mind. First in importance is the famous *Interludium de clerico et puella*, dating certainly in the early fourteenth century, probably earlier, a little drama with absolutely no religious or didactic purpose, a direct transfer of a *fabliau* or humorous tale into dramatic form. It matters little whether this interlude was intended for presentation by one or several persons. It is impossible to suppose that, if such dramatizations of *fabliaux* existed, their rendition by several persons was not put into practice, as in the folk-plays. Nor is it fair to assume that this interlude is an isolated example and exceptional. The fact that we have one only and not many such interludes preserved is not to the point; it is precisely what might be expected. The Church undoubtedly reprehended and did its best to suppress plays on secular themes as leading to license, just as it frowned on frivolous narrative literature, which nevertheless existed and found its audience; indeed, the admonitions of the Church in the abstract, or through its sterner upholders of good morals, did not succeed in restraining its own more worldly and light-minded clerics. Its influence might well extend to preventing the recording of such plays in permanent form or their destruction where possible. Here it is to be recalled that the Wycliffites denounced even miracles as sources of evil. Moreover, how small a part of the recorded literature of the Middle Ages has in any case come down to us. Yet, again, why should any large part of such dramatic literature be recorded in permanent form at all? Even though enjoyed with zest, there was no reason why such plays should receive permanent record or be multiplied for reading; how small a part of current dramatic literature is recorded permanently to-day. These plays were for acting; they served the minstrel's personal use; if written down, were kept as his stock in trade and worn out in use; were often, no

doubt, retained and transmitted *memoritur* with changes *ad libitum* at successive performances.

If early evidence in the form of plays is lacking, we are not so badly off as regards references to the performances of interludes. Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*, the date of which is about 1303, speaks of "interludes or singing, or tabor's beat or other piping." In the latter half of the fourteenth century, in the courtly romance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* it is said that such doings well befit at Christmas time "in default of interludes to laugh and sing." Fabyan, in his *Chronicle*, 1494, speaks of Alfred's going into the camp of the Danes disguised as a minstrel and showing them his interludes and songs. Douglas, in the *Palace of Honour*, 1501, says "at ease they ate with interludes between."

Without pushing the significance of these references too far, it seems clear that at the beginning of the fourteenth century stock humorous stories familiar in narrative were converted into dramatic form; that the lines from Manning at the beginning of that century, and from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* towards its close, clearly associate the term "interlude" with pleasure and entertainment; that the reference in Fabyan clearly associates the presentation of interludes with the minstrel. There is no reason for supposing that the interludes referred to are miracles or moralities; the probability is decidedly the other way when the reference in Douglas is considered. It need hardly be added that there is no evidence of the use of the term "interlude" for anything else than a play.

There is, accordingly, a reasonable probability, amounting, it is not too much to say, to a moral certainty, that throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the term denotes a dramatic performance given for entertainment, and that such performances were given by minstrels.

### 3. THE FARCE AND BALLAD PLAY

At the beginning of the sixteenth century influences which had been maturing during the previous two cen-

turies in conjunction with influences from without England made possible the development of a secular drama of recognized standing and therefore capable of continuous development.

At the close of the fourteenth century, besides the popular miracle of the old tradition, there existed a miracle and morality contemporary and controversial in its teaching, to which, in the plays of Bishop John Bale in the coming century, was added the impress of a natural dramatic talent of high order. To pageants, mummings, "disguisings," masques, had been added songs and perhaps spoken dialogue. There were companies of amateurs and semi-professionals throughout the provinces. There were companies of professional players under the titular protection of great nobles. Secular plays, doubtless for the most part trivial in theme and crude in form, were included, together with miracles and moralities, in the repertories of these companies.

Under these new conditions two elements of the greatest importance for the future of the drama find their opportunity for freer development. One is humor. Humor had long played an important part in the miracle as its Bible characters became converted into realistic types, and might even assert itself amid the sententious didacticism of the morality. In one miracle of the nativity, the *Second Shepherds' Play* of the Townely Cycle of miracles,<sup>1</sup> the episode of Mak the Sheep-stealer is a farce or low comedy, complete in itself and of real dramatic merit. The other element is that of history — the presentation of historic and legendary personages and events. This element was derived, on the one hand, from the folk-play, — for example, the Robin Hood plays, the St. George plays, plays on the rebellion of Jack Straw, — and, on the other hand, from the pageant and mumming. Plays depending for their interest on these two elements came to form an important part of the stock in trade of minstrels turned player and other play-giving associations, and contained

<sup>1</sup> See *Early Plays*, Riverside Literature Series, for a modernized version of this play and comment upon it.

in themselves the germs respectively of the future comedy and tragedy. But, in the case of both, external influences were necessary to lift them to an assured standing and the possibility of development toward artistic merit.

#### 4. THE FRENCH FARCE

Before taking up the first of the external influences affecting the purely humorous play or farce in England, it will be helpful to contrast the conditions affecting its development in France and in England. Throughout France the performance of farces was furthered by the activity of so-called *puy*s, or *sociétés joyeuses*, associations of amateurs, purely social and pleasure-seeking in purpose, in addition to the play-giving of confraternities of students as an incidental feature of their community life. These societies played pieces of every kind, religious, moral, and frankly secular. Everywhere in France, apparently, there was immunity from interference as regards plays of satiric or frivolous content which was apparently not permitted in England.

In England, only one society resembling the French *puy* is known to have existed, namely, in London. Plays which gave offense to the Church were acted by a guild of Brothelyngham in Exeter in the middle of the fourteenth century, and were repressed by Bishop Grandison. The presumption is that there was more activity of this sort than appears on record, carried on only as local conditions gave opportunity. The farce had its chief opportunity in the hands of quondam minstrels. It was cruder and less developed than its French analogue; it was repressed where it attracted the attention of zealous church authorities; it had not attained social standing and the possibility of higher development.

The difference is not merely one of what may be called, somewhat invidiously, a fundamental difference in moral attitude of the two countries, or of a greater austerity in the Church, or the influence of Lollardism, though these are factors of essential importance. There



is also the characteristic inability of England to make artistic advance without external help, and also its social conservatism, slowness to accept innovation and change of any sort. It is no anachronism to assume a distinction in social status between plays of different character at this time. There might well be an entire willingness to enjoy in hall or on the street an amusing folk-play or dramatized *fabliau* of the strolling minstrel, when, on formal occasions, a pageant or a miracle or morality would be the only suitable or chief offering, and the purely humorous interlude be admitted only as a more or less casual, additional, and nominally inferior entertainment, however much more real enjoyment might be derived from it.

All these differences may be illustrated somewhat aptly by considering a fairly close parallel in another form of literature, intimately related to the farce except in form, the *fabliau* — both being treatments of single comic incidents, usually from *bourgeois* life and usually more or less ribald. In France, there remain in round numbers about a hundred *fabliaux*; in England, apart from the group in Chaucer, there are only two in the fourteenth century (one, the *Land of Cockayne*, not really a *fabliau*) and a dozen or so in the fifteenth, which have come to record. There were, of course, a host of them which have never come to record. It is worth noting also, by the way, that Chaucer apologizes not only for repeating the words used by his churlish characters, — asking that this be not ascribed to ill-breeding in him, — but also for the character of the tales themselves, praying every gentle wight not to deem that he speaks with evil intent.

If, then, the farce occupied a distinctly inferior position, as belonging characteristically to the strolling minstrel and the tavern audience, how was it to attain to proper standing and acceptance? Here, as often before and afterward, England seems to have learned the necessary lesson from without. In France the farce had reached its full development in the course of the fourteenth century. Between 1494 and 1495 French minstrels visited England; we do not know what they played, but we do

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not need to depend upon this evidence, for the intercourse between the French and English courts provides the necessary connection. Young<sup>1</sup> has given proper emphasis to the fact that in 1514 Henry VIII and his sister Mary visited the court of Louis XII, and that soon after Mary and Louis were married. And it was within the court, and under its influence, that we find the element of humor and of pure entertainment taking more definitely literary and artistic form, and achieving an assured social recognition, in the plays of John Heywood, which, indeed, show gradation through plays ostensibly serious in subject to plays frankly farcical and realistic.

John Heywood was born in 1497 or 1498, and was already in the service of the court in 1514-15. In 1519 he is entered in Henry VIII's *Book of Payments* as a singer, in 1526, 1538-42, as "player of the virginals"; in 1536-37, his servant was paid for bringing the Princess Mary's "regalles" (a form of small organ) from London to Greenwich; in March, 1537, he was paid 40s. for "playing an interlude with his children" before her (the children are assumed to have belonged to the school of St. Paul's). He was evidently in Mary's favor. He took part in a pageant in St. Paul's churchyard in honor of her coronation, and in 1553 presented a play at court acted by children, and in 1558 received from her leases of land in Yorkshire. Elizabeth's accession drove him into exile. There are various references to him in state papers, including a letter thanking Burleigh for the payment of arrears on his lands at Romney. From 1575 to 1578 he was at Antwerp in the Jesuit college there, and when its members were driven out, went to Louvain. In 1587 there is mention of him as "dead and gone."<sup>2</sup>

Heywood's career presents the familiar association of service as singer, musician, manager of a child's company for the presentation of plays, and author; what else he

<sup>1</sup> "The Influence of French Farce upon the Plays of John Heywood," *Modern Philology*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> On the life of Heywood, see in particular Pollard in Gayley's *Representative English Comedies*, and Bang in *Englische Studien*, 38, 234-50.

may have done (his authorship apart from his plays is negligible) we do not know. But his private relationships are of great interest and importance. He married the grand-niece of Sir Thomas More, and his brother-in-law, William Rastell, printed two plays certainly his and two more which are ascribed to him. A circle of kinsfolk actively interested in the drama here discloses itself. Sir Thomas More even as a lad was interested in pageants and plays; the familiar story will be recalled of his stepping among players acting before Cardinal Morton and improvising a speaking part. John Heywood, More's brother-in-law, and Heywood's father-in-law, the lawyer and printer, printed plays and, it is surmised, was himself a playwright. That he gave a play on a stage erected in his garden, had costumes made by a tailor whom Mrs. Rastell superintended and assisted, and engaged craftsmen of the half-amateur, half-professional class to take part, appears from the records of a law-suit with the agent or lessee who had charge of the costumes later and rented them out for performances.<sup>1</sup>

Four extant plays are certainly Heywood's. *Wether* and *Love* bear his name on the title-pages of editions published by William Rastell. The earliest edition of the *Four P's*, dating between 1543-47, gives him as author. *Witty and Witless*, which survives in manuscript form, ends "Amen qd John Heywood."

These plays belong to a type quite distinct from the morality in form and spirit. They are set debates or pleadings on abstract questions, dialogues which depend for their interest upon the outcome of a conflict of wits, the adjudication of a case in equity, not at all upon a continuous, and very little upon incidental, dramatic action. In *Witty and Witless*, the thesis is whether it is better to be a fool or a wise man; in *Love*, the pains and pleasures of love; in *Wether*, the hearing of pleas preferred to Jupiter, by a number of his human subjects, who desire certain kinds of weather for their profit or pleasure, each of course wishing something different — a gentleman, mer-

<sup>1</sup> See Pollard's *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, pp. 307-21.

chant, water-miller, wind-miller, gentlewoman, laundress, and "boy, the least that can play"; in *The Four P's* (i.e., "P's" with reference to the professions of the participants), the Palmer, Pardoner, and Potheary dispute hotly as to the superiority of their callings and refer their dispute to the Pedlar, who evades the responsibility by proposing that he render judgment as to who can tell the greatest lie.

Delight in the argumentation and arbitration of set questions, whether wholly serious and to our minds dull, as in the *Melibeus* used by Chaucer, or engagingly sprightly, as in the early *Owl and the Nightingale*, goes far back into medieval times; its characteristic artistic expression was in the *estrif*, or "debate," of which the *Owl and the Nightingale* is an example. With allegory it is a leading factor in the development and long life of the morality, and it rendered easy the transition from the religious morality to the didactic and controversial morality. Heywood's interludes differ sharply from the morality in their brevity, in their dependence for interest not upon allegoric action but upon the pith, point, humor of the dialogue, and in their spirit, for despite the pretense of a serious intention their real purpose is to afford entertainment. Form, and in large part substance, may be alien to us at this distance of time, but the true comedy spirit is there.

These plays (and, indeed, the two others to the consideration of which we come in a moment) were long regarded as an outgrowth of the morality, their radical departure from its form and spirit being considered as due to Heywood's original genius. The probability is that these dialogues are due to inspiration from the French, and that Heywood, with use of native material and with indubitable originality and skill, naturalized the new type found in French models. In the case of one, Young has pointed out a French parallel. *Wit and Folly* presents the same ideas as the French *Dyialogue du Fol et du Sage*. Both, indeed, show direct influence from the *Encomium Morie* of Erasmus, but the resemblance to the French dialogue is such as materially to strengthen the probability that England owed the type to France.

Among these four plays is one, *The Four P's*, which, while it is in form a debate, is so free from any pretense of serious purpose, so undisguisedly intended for purposes of merriment, and so realistic in its characterization, that, as Young has said, it shows close affiliation with the farce. The point is important, for we now reach two plays ascribed to Heywood on internal evidence only — save for the single fact, for what it is worth, that both were published by William Rastell. In the *Pardoner and the Friar*, the *Curate and Neighbor Pratt*, the Pardoner and Friar, urging their respective claims upon a congregation in a parish church, reach a point where they drop argument and abuse for a rough-and-tumble fight. The curate of the church enters and, in wrath, with the help of Neighbor Pratt, is about to carry them off for punishment, when they suddenly turn the tables on their captors and go free. In the justly famous *Merry Play between Johan the Husband Johan, Tyb his wife, and Sir Johan the Priest*, usually called *Johan Johan*, the husband Johan Johan, divided between anger and cowardice, is set to softening wax at the fire to mend a leaky pail, while his wife Tyb and her lover, the priest, eat a pie of which Johan Johan gets no share. Anger at last overcomes his cowardice and fear of a scandal; he belabors them and drives them out, yields again immediately to his fears, and goes after them lest his outburst might lead to his further betrayal.

There can be no question of Heywood's authorship of these two plays — the internal evidence is too strong. It may be objected that from the dramatic standpoint they are strikingly superior to Heywood's known plays; but this objection may be answered by pointing to *The Four P's* among the known plays. It is true, also, that any pretense of conventional moralizing is frankly abandoned for lively realism, — in both, as Boas notes, the evil-doers are finally triumphant, — while the known plays (save *The Four P's*) treat themes of a recognized status and open and close upon a note of edification. This objection is at once removed when it is remembered that the debate pre-

supposes a moral, while the farce (both plays in their titles are called "merry" plays) is expressly freed from moral restraint.

In the case of these two plays, as in his dialogues, the assumption is unavoidable that Heywood worked upon French models. A close parallel to *Johan Johan* is afforded by the French farce *De Pernet qui va au vin*, and there is a general similarity in situation, though not in detail, to the *Pardoner and the Friar* in a French farce dealing with a contest between a Pardoner and an Apothecary. In both cases, Heywood's plays are thoroughly English, wholly his own; in the second, his inspiration is derived in large part from Chaucer, and influence from the French cannot confidently be asserted. But the conclusion seems unavoidable that he knew and was influenced by French farce.

The exact character and extent of the French influence upon Heywood needs, however, careful definition; the very fact that his plays are made thoroughly English indicates this. Young, in urging the indebtedness of Heywood to French models, is inclined to the view that anything resembling the *genre* of farce in France was unknown in England. The presumption, as shown above, is the other way. What happened may well have been this. The English court, through French minstrels in England and visits to France, learned in France of a new type of play, the dramatized debate. It also found that in France greater consideration was paid to the "merry play," the farce; that this type of play, which in England occupied a humble and casual place and was under the Church's disfavor, had come to be treated there by men of superior education with artistic skill and with wit and spirit, and had shouldered aside other types of play in the regard of the court. For a similar development the English court was quite ready; the story may be recalled of Henry VIII's leaving in the midst of the performance of a morality which he found tedious. Heywood was the appointed medium for the development of the new types. He used French models, but he also had na-

tive English traditions and material to draw from. It is not derogatory to his genius to say that otherwise his dependence upon French sources would have been more close and definite. It may be added that this general view does not subtract materially from his merits. His freedom and cleverness in the use of his materials is plain enough in any case, and there can be no question of his great influence upon the general development of the drama, — to which, of course, his connection with the court substantially contributed. Through Heywood, plays depending upon humor alone, and freed of the didactic element, achieved an assured standing. Their direct successors are farces and broad comedy upon native themes such as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.

## II

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLASSIC DRAMA

We must turn next to an element of very great importance in the development of the artistic comedy, and one of still greater importance in the development of the tragedy, namely, the influence of the classic drama. This for a moment will take us far afield.

In that complex movement termed the Renaissance, when, after testing and discarding old beliefs and methods, a new intellectual world was framed, the most important element in effecting the transition from medievalism to modernity was humanism, that is, the study of the past — the study of the philosophy and literature of the ancient world — in order to apply the lessons thereby learned to the problems of the present. We are not concerned here with humanism in its larger and more important relations as transforming man's whole interpretation of the meaning and purpose of life, but with its effects upon literature and upon a special literary mode, the drama. Humanism had an immediate effect upon pure literature in that it gave it greater freedom of development, but it

is well to note also that literature *per se* was not a vital issue with all humanists. In point of fact humanism replaced the old didacticisms by didacticisms of its own, which necessarily persisted until certain lessons had been learned. This truth has a direct reference to the drama, for it is only too easy to make the hasty assumption that, with the recovery and study of the classics, the use of classic plays as models would readily and directly lead to an advance in artistic quality.

Of the Latin dramatists, Terence only was more or less widely read during the Middle Ages. But even Terence was not imitated in strict dramatic form.<sup>1</sup> It seems clear also that the classic dramas which were known were not played. This appears from the widespread misunderstanding of the terms "tragedy" and "comedy" as applied to narrative poems of sad or happy ending, and from the fact that no one understood that the classic dramas were presented by impersonation with spoken dialogue, the nearest approach to a proper conception of the manner of their rendition being that they were declaimed by the poet from an elevated pulpit while the action was performed in dumb-show by assistants below.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest use of the classical drama, in the plays of Terence, did not spring apparently from a realization of its original purpose. There exist, dating from an early period, narrative poems in Latin, partly dramatic in form as carried on largely or wholly in dialogue, evidently suggested by and sometimes containing material drawn from Terence, — though based in larger part on current medieval material, — which plainly at first were delivered in monologue. Cloetta would regard these as designed for use by minstrels; this is improbable as supposing many audiences sufficiently versed in Latin — such audiences as would only be found in the monastery or chapter-house.

<sup>1</sup> The plays of Hrotswitha, the nun of Gandersheim, about 1000, form an exception, but one, it is probable, of curious interest only.

<sup>2</sup> See on this whole subject William Creizenach, *Geschichte des Neueren Dramas*, and Wilhelm Cloetta, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters und die Renaissance, Komödie und Tragödie im Mittelalter*, or Chambers's helpful summary and comment, 2207 ff.



Chambers sees no reason why the more edifying of them should not have been school-pieces. This supposition is acceptable if we remove all restrictions and surmise that they may have been the work of clerics or monks; of students at the universities; or of schoolmasters for use in their schools. In large part, it seems probable, they may be referred to members of the faculty or students in the universities — written for the delectation of special circles, or for public festival occasions; now in the vernacular, or again in Latin, especially if intended for an audience of students from various countries. With the fifteenth century these quasi-dramatic pieces approximate more nearly to dramatic form, as consisting wholly of dialogue, or may even contain a true dramatic action, albeit slight and rudimentary. Just when the acting of such pieces began is not clear. But two points are clear and of importance. The acting of such pieces composed by schoolmasters for presentation by their scholars to afford them practice in Latin gave rise to the Latin school-play. The writing of such plays eventually became general throughout Italy, France, Germany, Holland, and England. The second point is that, while they may on occasion make use of material from Terence, they do not show, until a late period and because of a separate development to be spoken of in a moment, any realization of any advantage to be attained by an imitation of the form of Roman comedy. They are purely contemporary in their affiliation with current modes of drama — the farce or other forms of lighter entertainment on the one hand, and miracles and moralities on the other. The object may be merely entertainment, as in such a little piece as the *Thersites*, one of the *dialogi* of J. Ravisius Textor (died 1530) professor of rhetoric in Paris and later rector of the university; or the inculcation of moral truth, as in the important series of plays upon the parable of the Prodigal Son which started in Holland and which displays closer imitation of Terence; or to bring an effective weapon to bear in theological controversy, as in the plays of Kirchmayer in Germany, Sixtus Birk and Niklas Manuel in Switzer-

land, Wickram in Alsace, the famous Scotchman, George Buchanan (who made use of Seneca) in Bordeaux. Here at the beginning of the sixteenth century the school-play merges with the controversial and didactic morality, and is also under a specific influence from the classic drama of quite separate origin, and more distinctly non-didactic and artistic.

Returning to the study of the classic drama among the humanists, there came an important result of the fruits of this study among the humanists of Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Seneca and Plautus were read as well as Terence, and plays — for reading only, not impersonation — were modeled upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The eager interest of the humanists was intensified by the discovery in 1427 of twelve plays of Plautus. While it was for the most part concentrated on the Latin drama, there was also study and translation of the Greek drama in Italy throughout the fifteenth century ; this was limited in amount and far less fruitful in its influence upon the growth of a new drama.

The interest of the humanists was one largely academic and scholarly, and too far removed from those aims and impulses that are essential to the production of a literature possessed of life and possibilities of independent growth. The revitalization of the old drama, the true recovery of it for its proper purpose, in its proper relation, by staging and impersonation, seem to have been long deferred. Eventually this important advance was made. Classic plays were first acted in Italy in the fifteenth century. Strange as it may seem, there was no general understanding that these plays had been intended for impersonation until the sixteenth century. The fact that plays in Latin were being played — the school-plays described above with their use of classic material and fumbling imitation of classic plays —

<sup>1</sup> For example, Mussato, *Ecerinis*, about 1314, Senecan tragedy ; Petrarch, *Philologia*, before 1331, Terentian comedy ; Aretino, *Poliscene*, about 1390, Terentian comedy ; Carrarro, *Progne*, before 1428, Terentian comedy ; Ugolino, *Philomena*, before 1437, Terentian comedy ; Dati, *Hiempsal*, 1441, a tragedy based in part on Plautus.

does not seem to have suggested the experiment of playing the classic plays themselves. In Italy the realization of their original mode of representation seems to have come through Alberti's work on architecture, 1452, based on the *De Architectura* of Vitruvius,<sup>1</sup> whose references to the Roman stage made the fact plain. Alberti built a *theatrum* in the Vatican for Nicholas V; but there is no record of its use, as the followers of Nicholas were not humanists. It was through the influence of Pomponius Lætus, a professor in the University of Rome, that the *Asinaria* of Plautus and the *Phædra* of Seneca were given, the latter with sensational success. A year or two later in 1486, the *Menæchmi* was given at Ferrara, and at the Vatican in 1502. The *Mostellaria* was given in 1499, and translations were played at Mantua, Gazzuolo, and Venice, the presentations of Plautus at Mantua deserving special note. The first close imitation of classic comedy is credited to Harmonius Marius, about 1500; such close imitations were, however, few. A similar development in the rest of Europe was delayed till the sixteenth century, though the movement in Italy was known, and though Terence and Seneca were studied in the fresh light this knowledge afforded. The school-dialogue and the lesser forms of humanistic drama growing out of it continued to suffice, and, either through ignorance of the new movement or failure to realize its possibilities in the way of interest, it was not till well on in the first quarter of the sixteenth century that the presentation of plays of Terence in the schools became general. Before this an effort to imitate more closely the "regularity" of the Latin play in the humanistic comedy can be perceived, but the influence of more frequent presentation of the plays themselves as emphasizing their superiority could not but be great both upon the school-master who drilled his pupils and upon the pupils when later themselves essaying dramatic composition.

While the study and imitation of classic tragedy went through the same stages as appear in the case of comedy, there is one important difference. Even when it was un-

<sup>1</sup> See Creizenach, 2, 1 ff.

derstood that classic plays had been impersonated, and the plays had been given in the Latin or the vernacular, and attempts had been made to imitate them closely, the older forms of humanistic comedy and morality held their own and obstructed the artistic advance of the comedy which close imitation would have insured. In the case of tragedy there was also the obstacle that the comedy of both kinds offered obstruction to the writing of tragedy, and even within the academic circles in which the general movement originated it was long before the conception of tragedy proper became clear and created its separate and individual appeal. Despite the study and imitation and acting of Seneca in Italy in the fifteenth century, there was not in the early sixteenth century a clear conception of tragedy as a mode distinct from comedy. The only difference between them apparently to the playwright was that the one had a happy ending and the other a sad ending. This appears in the so-called *drammi mescolati*, or dramas of mixed mode, in which, by gradual adaptation, tragedy and comedy became differentiated, and a conception was formed of their separate and appropriate forms. Early, it must at once be noted, — in *Filistrato e Panfila*, played 1499, — a feature of special importance, the use of the tragic chorus in so-called *intermedi* or interludes, which divide the action into five acts, is introduced from Seneca. To use of the chorus follows use of a subject from ancient history, as in the *Sofonisba* of Galeotto. A gradual approach to observance of the unity of place and the limitation of the action follows, leading through a train of tragi-comedies or plays of purely tragic theme (among which the *Sofonisba* of Trissino stands out as a marked advance in its observance of unity of place, its use of blank verse instead of a variety of meters, its imitation of both Greek and Latin meters) to the *Orbecche* of Cinthio, the first “regular” Italian tragedy and the first “regular” modern tragedy presented on the stage. This was acted in 1541. In Germany, though plays of Seneca were printed as early as 1487, and Senecan and Greek tragedy were acted in schools about 1525, classic tragedy was not imitated until

the seventeenth century, the school-play and its related forms occupying the field. In France, where there appears less evidence of early study of the classic tragedies, the influence of the Biblical tragedies of the Scotch humanist, Buchanan at Bordeaux, and Muret's tragedy of *Julius Cæsar*, gave inspiration, before the middle of the sixteenth century, to a series of original tragedies as well as translations of Latin, Greek, and Italian tragedies, which culminate in the *Cléopâtre Captive* of Jodelle (1552), and the *Medée* of Jean de la Perouse (before 1553), based directly upon Seneca, but influenced also by Euripides. With these tragedies — though others followed naturally which were less advanced in type — the classic tragedy of France may be said to begin. In Spain, apart from translation, there was no attempt at formal tragedy until toward the end of the century. In Portugal, already in the middle of the century the individual genius of Ferrera, who probably knew the *Sophonisba* of Trissino, achieved a great tragedy upon the theme of Inez di Castro. In the general development, two facts become clear. The development of tragedy was obstructed by the older and newer types of comedy — as well, of course, by the difficulty of arriving at a clear appreciation of tragedy as a separate mode. Also, earlier plays, through their direct imitation of Seneca, are often measurably more close to the classic model than plays which follow — but, in these plays which follow, there is a gradual working towards closer imitation, which is, in fact, more fruitful than mechanical imitation, as representing a growth in the real understanding of the underlying principles of the classic form, and their adoption or modification in accordance with the individual genius of the country.

The history of the movement in its main outlines is clear, even though the details of the interplay of forces old and new is now hard to trace with precision. With this survey of the movement throughout Europe we may pass to its manifestations in England. Of the secular school-dialogue in England there are no traces until the imitation, acted 1537, of Ravisius Textor's little dialogue

of *Thersites*, a farce on the motive of the "braggart captain," in this case represented by a boy whose braggart courage disappears at sight of a snail, sending him for protection to his mother, and the Latin, possibly also English, "tragedies" and "comedies" acted at the school of Ralph Radelif at Hitchin, established in 1538. Of a previous native development of the school-dialogue there are no traces, and the possibility of any general origination of plays of this simpler type was estopped by the production of classic plays and imitations of them. In 1520 a comedy of Plautus was presented at the court of Henry VIII. The boys of St. Paul's school under their master, John Ritwise, who had acted a Continental morality before Henry in 1527, acted the *Phormio* before Wolsey in 1528, perhaps also the *Menæchmi* in 1527; and they gave—at what time is unknown—Ritwise's own Latin tragedy of *Dido*. The scholars of Eton were producing plays by 1525–27. In the universities, the giving of plays can be traced back at Oxford to 1486. At Cambridge the earliest record is 1536, but the play on this occasion was the *Plutus* of Aristophanes in the Greek. Representations of classic plays at the universities are not recorded before 1550 save in this case and the production of the *Pax* of Aristophanes in 1546 also at Cambridge. The translation of classic plays into English began with the *Andria* of Terence under the title of *Terens in English*, perhaps printed by John Rastell, and, if so, to be dated before 1533. Before 1550 Greek plays were being translated into Latin by Ascham and Cheke, and Latin plays were being written on Greek models. Two plays in Latin, a certain *Marcus Geminus*, and a tragedy *Progne*, by Canon Calhill, were given before Elizabeth on the occasion of her visit to Oxford, 1564, and an intended production of *Ajax Flagellifer* was omitted owing to the Queen's fatigue. The numerous translations and imitations of the classics following upon the awakened interest in the classics, and lying beyond the sixties, fall beyond the scope of this volume.

## III

## AUTHOR AND PLAY

## 1. NICHOLAS UDALL

The *Ralph Roister Doister* of Nicholas Udall is the first English play which we possess — probably the first English play of substantial merit — to show the influence, in substance and in form, of the study of the classic drama.

Born in Hampshire in 1505, Nicholas Udall<sup>1</sup> was admitted scholar at Winchester in 1517 (aged twelve) and scholar of Corpus Christi, Oxford, January 18, 1520 (having "past his fifteenth year at Christmas"). He received the baccalaureate degree May 30, 1524, and was appointed probationary fellow September 30. About 1526, he was one of several arrested on Wolsey's order for possession of Tyndale's New Testament and the purchase of Lutheran books. Upon recantation he was released, but suspicion of Lutheran tendencies delayed his proceeding M.A. until 1534. He became at Oxford a close friend of the great antiquary, John Leland, among whose poems are three which praise his learning and generous temper (*Collectanea*, 1774, 5, 89, 90, 105). The two friends were joint authors of verses used in a pageant in celebration of the coronation of Anne Boleyn in 1533.<sup>2</sup> Under this date, though Udall's

<sup>1</sup> See, in particular, for his life, W. D. Cooper, ed. *R. R. D.*, Shakespeare Society, 1847; E. Arber, ed. *R. R. D.*, English Reprints, 1869; J. W. Hales, *Englische Studien*, 18, 408 (1893); E. Flügel in *An English Miscellany*, 1901; also his edition of *R. R. D.* in C. M. Gayley's *Representative English Comedies*; E. K. Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, 2, 451; F. S. Boas, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, 5, 45, 452. The articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in the edition by Williams and Robin contain serious errors. See also the now current error in regard to the dates of Udall's vicariate of Braintree, corrected below.

<sup>2</sup> Date corrected by Flügel in Gayley, 89. For Udall's verses (which show the influence of Skelton), see Arber's *English Garner*, 2, 52.

preface is dated 1534, was published Udall's *Floures for Latine Spekynges selected and gathered out of Terence*, a most successful school-book, which, with two enlargements, ran through five further editions by 1581.<sup>1</sup> In the preface, written from the Augustinian monastery in London, Udall dedicated the work to his pupils, so that he was probably teaching in London at this time.

In 1534 he proceeded M.A. and was appointed Magister Informator (head master) of Eton. Traditions of his severity in the use of the birch are due to Tusser's reference to his having received at one time fifty stripes from him "for fault but small, or none at all."<sup>2</sup>

Evidence of dramatic activity at Eton is drawn from a consuetudinary, or book of customs, of the school dating about 1560, in which it is said that the master of the plays may also present plays in English if they possess keen wit and grace. Contemporary evidence is afforded by Thomas Cromwell's accounts for 1538, "Woodall, the schoolmaster of Eton, for playing before my Lord, £5."<sup>3</sup>

While head master at Eton, Udall held the vicariate of Braintree in Essex from 1537 to 1544. The dates are given by Chambers incorrectly (in consequence of a slip in Karl Pearson's *The Chances of Death*, 2, 412, note) as 1533-37, with the suggestion that Udall "not improbably wrote the play of *Placidus, alias Sir Eustace*, recorded in 1534 in the church-wardens' accounts." The error, and this inference from it, are repeated in the *Cambridge History* and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

In 1541, silver images and other plate were removed from the chapel at Eton by two of the pupils of the school with connivance of Udall's servant, Gregory. Udall was accused of complicity and of other offenses, was

<sup>1</sup> Compare Boas, *Cambridge History*, 5, 45, 452.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper's citation from Ascham to similar effect is shown by Flügel to be in error.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, 2, 451, citing Brewer, xiv, 2, 234.

<sup>4</sup> The dates are given correctly by Cooper. Full details have been most courteously furnished me by the Rev. J. W. Kenworthy, former Vicar of Braintree, who writes that he has in hand an article upon Udall's vicariate of Braintree.



imprisoned, and lost his position. The charges were not sustained, or were dropped. A letter from Udall without superscription, addressed to some person in high authority, probably Sir Thomas Wriothesley, one of the Secretaries of State, expresses his gratitude for attempts to restore him to his head mastership, makes confession of debt and dissolute habits, and promises with deep contrition entire amendment of life.<sup>1</sup>

In 1542<sup>2</sup> he published his translation of two books of Erasmus's *Apophthegms*, and for the next three years he was one of the collaborators upon the translation of Erasmus's *Paraphrase of the New Testament*, approved by Henry VIII before his death, and a cherished project of Queen Katharine. In this work the Princess Mary took part as a translator until prevented by ill-health. In addition to his labors as translator, Udall had general supervision of the first volume, and wrote three prefatory epistles to it, one to King Edward, one to the reader, and one to Katharine, in which he highly praised the learning of the Princess Mary. During the reign of Edward, Udall was engaged upon theological works and in preaching.<sup>3</sup>

Bale, in his *Illustrium Scriptorum Summatio* refers, in the edition of 1548, to a *Tragedia de Papatu* (i.e., papal office, papacy), probably a translation of Ochino's work. A continuous dramatic activity is not necessarily indicated by this latter reference. During Edward's reign we have note of other activities, but he may well have

<sup>1</sup> See this letter, newly collated, in Flügel's *Lesebuch*, 1, 351, and cf. Hales, *Englische Studien*, 18, 414, note.

<sup>2</sup> A sojourn in the "north," apparently to engage in teaching, the subject of one of Leland's poems, is referred by Flügel to this year. His stay in any case must have been short and the matter is without moment.

<sup>3</sup> His tract in answer to the rebels of Devonshire and Cornwall (Camden Society, 1884) show him still an ardent reformer. In 1551 he published a translation of Peter Martyr's *Tractatus de Eucharista et disputatio de Eucharista*, under a royal patent which also licensed him to print the Bible in English, a valuable privilege which he apparently did not use. He was also tutor to Edward Courtenay, who was imprisoned in the tower, and likewise served for some time as tutor in Bishop Gardiner's family, who left him a bequest. A collection of letters addressed to Leland and Horman (vice-provost of Eton) is cited by Bale.

continued, at court, his old interest in dramatic matters. The King's favor was shown him by his presentation in 1551 to a prebend in Windsor, and by a request in the following year that he be paid emoluments which he had forfeited by not taking residence owing to preaching engagements. In 1552 he published a folio edition, notable for the beauty of its plates, of T. Gemini's *Anatomy*. In 1553 he was presented by the King to the Parsonage of Calborne, Isle of Wight. It was in this year that Thomas Wilson quoted the letter from *Ralph Roister Doister* in his *Rule of Reason*, which establishes Udall's authorship.

Still an active reformer in Edward's reign, there is no evidence that Udall trimmed to secure Mary's continued favor.<sup>1</sup> Mary simply continued her old favor and patronage to him as she did to Ascham. She would not be likely to forget her association with him in the translation of Erasmus's *Paraphrase*, and the compliments he paid her learning in the preface to Katharine. Moreover, he could serve her, if not as a theologian, as a playwright and manager. His dramatic activities at this time are intimately associated with the date of *Ralph Roister Doister* and may be more conveniently treated below.

In 1555 he is mentioned as head master of Westminster School. The date of his appointment is unknown. Alexander Nowell was master from 1543 to 1553. Whether Udall followed him immediately or not does not appear from the records, — a fact to be regretted as the matter has important bearings to be referred to later. In November, 1556, Udall lost the head mastership upon the reëstablishment of the monastery of Westminster, died in the following month, and was buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster, December 23. It remains only to note that in the 1557 edition of Bale's *Summarium*, mention is made of *comedias plures* by Udall, and that, on August

<sup>1</sup> Sidney Lee's assumption that the "Mr. Udall" who was one of those who tried in 1553 to make the Protestant martyr, Thomas Montford, recant (Nicolls, *Narrative of the Reformation*, Camden Society, p. 178), was Nicholas Udall, seems wholly unjustified.

8, 1564 (Nicolls, *Progresses of Elizabeth*, 3, 177), there was given at Cambridge "an English play called *Ezechias*, made by Mr. Udall, and handled by King's College men only." As King's College was founded in connection with Eton, it is a fair inference that the play was one written for Eton, and was at this time repeated at Cambridge by Etonians who had taken part in it there.

## 2. THE DATE OF THE PLAY

In 1818, the Rev. Thomas Briggs printed privately an edition of thirty copies of an old play, *Ralph Royster Doyster*, one of a collection "lately upon sale in London." The play lacked a title-page, and was without a colophon. The author was unknown. The date was assumed to be in or about 1566, from an entry in the Stationers' Register recording that *Rauf Ruyster Duster* was licensed for printing in that year. Mr. Briggs presented his copy to his old school, Eton, unaware that his gift was the work of a former head master.

Tanner, in his *Bibliotheca*, 1748, mentioned that Thomas Wilson in his *Rule of Reason* used an illustration of ambiguity from "some comedy" by Nicholas Udall. Collier, in his notes on Dodsley's *Old Plays*, identified the passage as from *Ralph Roister Doister*, thus establishing its authorship. He probably knew of Tanner's note, but characteristically suppressed the fact to heighten the merits of his discovery; at all events, the edition of Wilson's work which he cites, the first, does not contain the passage, which first appeared in the third edition.

It is conceded that the play was intended for representation by school-boys. Starting from this assumption, three theories have been urged concerning the date and circumstances of composition.<sup>1</sup> It was at first taken for granted that Udall wrote the play while at Eton, that is,

<sup>1</sup> Arber, ed. *R. R. D.*; J. W. Hales, "The Date of the First English Comedy," *Englische Studien*, 18, 408; Williams and Robin, ed. *R. R. D.*; Flügel, in criticism of Hales, in Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, p. 98.

between 1534-41. In 1893, Hales contended for a later date, 1552, and the consequent probability that Udall wrote the play for Westminster School. Williams and Robin, in 1901, adopting Hales's reasoning in part, accepted the date 1552, but conjectured that Udall then wrote the play either for the court (possibly for the Children of the Chapel Royal), or for Eton, in consequence of his taking up his residence as Canon of Windsor. Flügel, in 1903, assailed the more important arguments advanced by Hales, believing the older view, that the play was written during Udall's head mastership of Eton, to be more probable.

The tendency has been to accept Hales's argument, though it will not bear detailed scrutiny, and to disregard Flügel's criticism of it. A summary of Hales's argument follows, and of Flügel's criticisms, with the addition of further evidence in support of Flügel's position and covering points which he omitted.

1. In the play, a letter written by Ralph to Custance so reads that, after he has copied it from a scrivener's draft (Act 3, Sc. 5), its sense, by his mispunctuation, is completely reversed (Act 3, Sc. 4). This letter was used as an example of ambiguity by Thomas Wilson in the third edition of his *Rule of Reason*, dated January, 1553. Hales argued that the use of the letter in the third edition, not the first and second of 1550-51, 1552, proves the comedy to have been written between the dates of the second and third editions, namely, in 1552, or else Wilson, who had been a pupil of Udall's at Eton and went up to Cambridge in the year Udall lost his head mastership, would certainly have used it before.

Flügel points out that Wilson's citation of the letter in 1553 does not prove the play to have been written in 1552, but only that Wilson did not have the letter to cite before 1553. The copy he used might have been in manuscript, or a printed and now lost edition. Flügel proceeds to the conclusion that "most probably Wilson's quotation was made from an early edition of *Roister* printed in 1552."

Flügel's answer is to the point, except that his assump-

tion of an early edition is wholly unnecessary. For we have direct evidence that Udall was in personal communication with Wilson just before 1553 (see under 3). There is nothing to prevent the assumption that Wilson then obtained from Udall a copy of the play, and extracted the letter from it, perhaps at the same time obtaining the material from the *Prologue* which he used in the *Art of Rhetoric*.

2. Bale, in his 1548 edition of the *Illustrium Majoris Britannice Scriptores*, said nothing of Udall's comedies. The reference to his comedies does not appear until the 1557 edition. Flügel rejoins that Bale does not give a complete list of Udall's works in either edition concerned. In the earlier edition he says nothing of Udall's share in the coronation pageant of Anne Boleyn. Bale might well never have heard of Udall's school-comedy.

3. Wilson published his *Art of Rhetoric* in 1553. Udall knew of it and contributed commendatory verses to it. In the *Art of Rhetoric* appears a parallel to the *Prologue* of Udall's play. Wilson was probably freshly influenced by Udall's *Prologue*, though it is likely the conception was a favorite one with Udall and had been impressed upon Wilson at Eton.

The reply to this point is plainly that the play need not have been recently written for Wilson to make use of the *Prologue*. The very fact that Udall contributed prefatory verses to Wilson's work shows that Udall and Wilson were in personal communication just before the *Art of Rhetoric* was published. It may be added, though not material to the argument, that the ideas used in Udall's *Prologue* and by Wilson were commonplaces.

4. "Certainly," Hales says, "about the year 1552 Udall was in high repute as a dramatist." We know nothing, Flügel truly replies, of Udall's repute as a dramatist in 1552. Hales offers no evidence except Udall's employment by Mary to arrange dramatic entertainments in 1554. All that Mary's warrant of that date tells us is that Udall had shown dialogues and interludes before her "at sundry seasons convenient heretofore." Moreover, it may be added, if we could prove the high repute of Udall in

1552, the fact would not have the slightest evidential value respecting the dating of *Ralph Roister Doister* in that year.

5. Hales continues, "Thus there is much to justify us in assigning 'the first English Comedy' to the year 1552. But, if the evidence for exactly so assigning it is not absolutely decisive, yet I think it can certainly be shown to be later than 1546." Heywood's *Proverbs* was "printed in 1546, '47, '49." Udall's play contains many proverbial expressions which appear in Heywood. If some fifteen coincidences can be found, one may justly conclude that one of the two is indebted to the other.

It is worth while to go into this point at somewhat greater length than Flügel, — who merely says quite truly that the use of any number of current phrases by Heywood and Udall could not prove dependence, — as the point has been cited (by Boas in the *Cambridge History*) as one of Hales's strongest arguments. The examples cited by Hales are for the most part the merest commonplaces — "each finger is a thumb," "in dock, out nettle," "in by the week," "mock much of you," "bees in his head," "chop-logic." Others, not so obviously current, can readily be proved to be proverbial sayings, or slang, by reference to the dictionaries. Foreexample, the curious word *nicebatur* was used by Udall himself in his translation of the *Apophthegms* of Erasmus, published in 1542, four years before the date assumed by Hales himself (the date is doubtful) for the first edition of Heywood.

6. In Act 5, Sc. 6, l. 19, Custance jokingly threatens Ralph that she will put him up into the Exchequer as a usurer, that is, have him indicted, because he will lend no blows without having back "fifteen for one, which is too much, of conscience." Hales brings this into connection with a statute of Henry VIII, properly 1545, not 1546, as he says, which repealed old laws against interest and allowed interest to the amount of ten per cent *per annum*; also further, "what perhaps concerns us yet more closely," with the statute of 1552, which repealed the former statute and made all interest illegal.

Flügel corrected Hales's dating of the earlier statute, and pointed out in addition that Custance's joke turns not only on 37 Henry VIII, c. 9, but also c. 20, which specified the period during which "lucre or gain" (note Custance's use of "gain," 5, 6, 29) should run as one year, not for a longer or shorter time. For Custance says —

And where other usurers take their gains yearly,  
This man is angry but he have his by and by, —

that is, at once. Moreover, Hales has not seen the conclusion to which the train of evidence which he has started, leads. The passage in question, or the whole play, must date between 1545 and 1552, that is, between the date of the statute permitting interest at ten per cent and the date of the later statute repealing this permission and making all interest illegal. After the repeal of the law, whenever it occurred in 1552, Custance's joke would be without point.

The importance of this conclusion, as weakening Hales's argument for the date 1552, is plain. It has further important bearings to be referred to below.

7. Frequent comment, Hales says, has been made upon the long interval between the first English comedy and the second. "But surely now that long interval is discredited." The date 1552 brings *Ralph Roister Doister* measurably nearer to the comedies which follow, *Misogonus*, 1560 or 1561, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, 1568.

The apparent cogency of this argument, which has caused it to be repeated in later references to the subject, is only superficial. Udall's successful use of his classic models and the intrinsic merits of his play are no better explained by assuming a date 1552 than a date 1541 or earlier. It is the first play of its kind extant. Its successors are not indebted to it or like it in kind. Every essential condition for its composition existed when Udall went to Eton as head master. What happened in the eleven years between Udall's leaving Eton and 1552 that would make the writing of such a play more possible? Above all, it must be remembered that the history of literature, notably the

drama, is full of examples of works which anticipate, by a number of years, later developments.

8. Mr. Hales next argues a connection of the play with Westminster. The play is most probably a school-play. If so, why can we not assume that it was written not for Eton but Westminster? It is true that we do not know that Udall was master in 1553, but he was in 1555, and we do not know of any other head master from 1553 on. "If what has been said as to the date of *Ralph Roister Doister* and also as to the destination of the play for some school is judged satisfactory, these considerations might form an argument in favour of Udall's appointment in 1553."

This reasoning, if analyzed in relation to what Mr. Hales really desires to prove, runs in a circle. The date of Udall's appointment is not the real objective. Mr. Hales says in effect that the character of the play and the assumed date of it, 1552, might lend support to the assumption of Udall's appointment in 1553, and, if then appointed, the play was written for Westminster. But, though the reasoning is fallacious, the growing tendency, because of Mr. Hales's article, to refer to the play offhand as written in 1552 for Westminster makes it advisable to point out further that we should have to assume that Udall, in the portion of 1552 before the repeal of the statute concerning interest, wrote a play for Westminster, of which he could not have been head master at the earliest before some date in 1553, and of which we do not know that he was head master before 1555.

Yet again there is no evidence for the acting of English plays at Westminster before Elizabeth's reign, and, indeed, the acting of Terence in Latin, before Elizabeth made it statutory to act a play of his each year, depends only upon the statement that Nowell (1543-53) introduced the acting of Terence.<sup>1</sup>

9. In further reference to a possible connection of the play with Westminster, Mr. Hales notes that the scene is laid in London. It has been suggested to him by a famous

<sup>1</sup> J. Sargeaunt, *Annals of Westminster*, 49; *Athenæum*, 1903, 1,220.



antiquary that possibly the oath "by the arms of Calais" used in the play may refer to some inn in the district of Westminster, as Westminster and Calais were seats of the wool staple.

The fact that the scene is laid in London is no proof of connection with Westminster. Considering the plot, where else could the scene be laid? It is surely a far cry to adduce the curious oath "by the arms of Calais" on the strength of the vaguest surmises concerning its origin. That oath was used long before by Skelton, from whom Udall borrowed it. Whatever it means, we may feel sure it has nothing to do with a supposititious inn in Westminster (the name of which, by a still more violent supposition, is used as an oath), but is connected in some way with the important part which Calais played in English history. When a playwright for a definite purpose localizes a play, he makes his localization definite and apparent. As a matter of fact, there is not a single reference or shred of evidence connecting the play with Westminster.

The net result of Mr. Hales's argument thus proves, when analyzed, to be as follows:—

1. The latest date possible for the play, or the particular passage in it concerning usury, is some time in 1552 before the repeal of the statute concerning interest.

2. There is also a presumption that the play was actually composed in that year, afforded by the fact that Wilson's third edition, 1553, of the *Rule of Reason* cites Ralph's letter, while the second, published in 1552, does not.

3. There is no proof for, and there is strong proof on account of the dates against, the composition of the play for Westminster.

We may now turn to the views of Williams and Robin, who, accepting Hales's date, 1552, but not a connection of the play with Westminster (on which point they are silent), suggest that the play was written as a result of Udall's taking up his residence at Windsor in 1552, to be given either at Eton, in consequence of being near his old school, or for performance before the court, possibly by

the Children of the Chapel Royal. Neither possibility is acceptable, and for the same reason. The latter supposition would be attractive if we could feel assured that the play was, indeed, written in 1552. But there are obvious difficulties in the way. Udall was presented to his prebend in November, 1551, but did not take up his residence till some time in 1552. This we know by the King's letter to the dean and chapter of the chapel, directing payment of his emoluments despite his absence from this position which had been given him. Udall dated his preface to Gemini's *Anatomy* from Windsor in July, 1552; this may indicate that he was then in residence, but not necessarily, as he might have been constructively though not actually in residence. If actually in residence, he could not have been so long before that date, or the matter of the payment of his emoluments as canon for the period of his absence would have been taken up earlier than September. We know from the King's letter that he was absent because he was engaged in preaching. It is, therefore, improbable that he was writing a play for presentation at Windsor or Eton. He must plainly have been preoccupied by matters of importance to defer entering upon his benefice, the King's gift, and run the chance of losing the emoluments of his position. It is hardly likely that the play would be in hand before he was actually in residence, and, if we are to suppose that the play was written after he took up residence, we should be forced to suppose it written between this time and the date of the repeal of the statute concerning interest in that year, if indeed that event fell later in the year.

If now it is clear that it is extremely improbable that Udall wrote the play for Westminster, and almost as improbable that he wrote it for the Children of the Chapel or for Eton when in residence at Windsor, it remains to review freshly the evidence for his having written it at Eton during his head mastership, 1534-41.

1. Udall was early concerned with dramatic activities. He took part in the pageant at Anne Boleyn's coronation. We have positive evidence that plays were produced un-

der his direction while at Eton, for he presented a play before Cromwell.

2. The play is admittedly a school-play. Udall might, of course, at any time have written a play for school-presentation, though not actually at the time a schoolmaster; but is such a supposition to be entertained for a moment as compared with the likelihood that the eager student of Terence and author of the *Flowers for Latin Speaking*, who had already taken part in dramatic composition, would eagerly seize the opportunity, while head master of Eton, to write a play modeled on the classics he had so assiduously studied?

3. In direct contrast with Westminster, we have clear evidence that English plays were early acted at Eton. To this evidence may be added the presumption that the *Ezekias*, an English play by Udall, acted before Elizabeth in 1564 wholly by King's College men, was a play written for Eton and there preserved and presented from time to time.

4. Every necessary condition for the production of an English play modeled on the ancients was in existence. Udall says in the play that Plautus and Terence now bear the bell — and there is ample evidence of a lively interest in the Latin comedies as acting plays before and at the time of his mastership at Eton. For example, a reference to the playing of Plautus appears in the *Utopia*, 1516. Plautus was played before Henry in 1520. The fact has not hitherto been brought into explicit connection with Udall's play that the *Terens in English*, namely, the *Andria*, adapted for English presentation and urging the claims of English to recognition as well as Greek and Latin, appeared a year or two before Udall went to Eton and might well have been his direct encouragement to his experiment. Is it possible to argue that a date between 1534-41 is unlikely on the ground of the source of his inspiration? Or on the ground of the freedom and skill with which Udall used his sources, when Heywood was using French sources with similar freedom? Were not, indeed, the conditions just such, as regards the general in-

terest in the sources from which the play is drawn, to make the writing of such a play the most likely thing possible?

4. The evidence for a date 1552, which excludes Udall's writing of the play for Westminster while head master, and renders improbable his writing it for production there before his head mastership, does not exclude its composition for Eton. Custance's joke regarding permissible interest, and the period during which interest must run, dates between 1546 and some time in 1552. This reference could perfectly well be a late insertion. It is not at all necessary to assume, with Flügel, a lost edition of the play, for such topical allusions are often inserted when a play is freshened up for a new presentation. The subject of usury was one of widespread interest both in a practical and theological connection, and the assumed insertion might have been made for some presentation at Eton or elsewhere, either when the statute was first passed or at a later date, perhaps when the question of its repeal was in the air. We have seen that the year 1552 itself is an unlikely year, because of Udall's preoccupations in that year. But it is perfectly possible that the play may have been given at the court at some time previous. In this connection the warrant dormer addressed by Mary to the Master of the Revels in 1554 is of interest. It reads as follows:--

"Trusty and well beloved we greet you well. And whereas our well beloved Nicolas Udall hath at sundry seasons convenient heretofore showed and mindeth hereafter to show, his diligence in setting forth of Dialogues, and Interludes before us for our regal disport and recreation, to the intent that we may be in the better readiness at all time when it shall be our pleasure to call, we will and command you, and every of you, that at all and every such time and times, so oft and whensoever he shall need, and require it, for showing of any thing before us, ye deliver or cause to be delivered to the said Udall, or to the bringer hereof in his name, out of our office of revels such apparel for setting forth of his devices before us, and such as may be seemly to be shewed in our royal presence, and

the same to be restored, and redelivered by the said Udall into your hands and custody again. And that ye fail not thos to do from time to time as ye tender our pleasure, till ye shall receive express commandment from us to the contrary hereof. And this shall be your sufficient warrant in this behalf. Given under our signet the 3rd. day of December in the second year of our reign.”<sup>1</sup>

The point which is of moment here is that it is extremely unlikely that Mary had discovered Udall's dramatic ability only upon her accession to the throne. It is of course not possible to infer from the reference to Udall's previous activity in Mary's service that he had been employed in this capacity before her coming to the throne in 1553. But it is also a fair inference that his dramatic activities were known to her before her accession. Considering his keen interest in dramatic activities, considering also her interest in dramatic entertainments evidenced by performances before her prior to her accession, considering Udall's close connection with the court of Edward, and with Mary personally, in the forties, does it seem unlikely that, having a play the excellence of which he must have well known, he may at some time have had that play presented at court, as he could readily do, and may at that time (which includes the date of the passing of the statute) have inserted the reference to the law regarding usury in Custance's joke? The only argument against such a supposition is the fact that Bale in his edition of 1548 says nothing of Udall's play, as one might suppose that he might do if it had been presented at court, in which case he might be likely to have heard of it. But this fact has really no evidential value whatsoever, for Bale might never have heard of the play, or might not have thought of it when treating Udall, or the play might have been given after 1548. Were Bale's omission of a mention of it an argument against its existence in 1548, we would have to suppose that the reference to Udall's *comedias plures* in the edition of 1557

<sup>1</sup> Given in full by Hales, *Englische Studien*, 18, 415. It was first printed by A. J. Kempe, *Losely MSS.* No. 31, p. 63.

proved that Udall wrote all his plays between 1546 and 1557, which would be contrary to the actual fact.

The supposition made above, or any similar supposition, is, it must be remembered, not material to the argument, which is simply that the play, if written for Eton, was not given once only, and that, at some date later than the original writing, Custance's joke was inserted. If Udall's *Ezekias* could be given years after it was written for Eton (as no doubt it was), we may feel sure *Ralph Roister Doister* was given at intervals after its first performance. Nor must it be forgotten that the play, as we have it, shows obvious marks of revamping to suit current conditions. The phrase "keep the Queen's peace" occurs in Act 1, Sc. 1, l. 38, and a prayer for the "Queen" occurs at the close. These afford no proof for date of composition, for Mary was not queen in 1552, Hales's assumed date, and both passages could be readily changed by substitution of "Queen" for "King" and correction of a few pronouns. They merely illustrate the familiar process of revamping a play to suit present conditions — in this case to make the play fit Elizabeth's reign.

5. The use made by Wilson of Ralph's letter as an example of ambiguity, which Hales uses to determine a date 1552, is in reality a strong proof in favor of the play's having been made for Eton during Udall's head mastership. Wilson left Eton the year Udall lost his place. We have seen that the year 1552 cannot be accepted as the year of composition. The conclusion is plain that Wilson did not include the letter in the two earlier editions because he was not in touch with his old teacher and did not have the letter to quote. He came into touch with Udall in 1552, as proved by Udall's commendatory verses to the *Art of Rhetoric*, published in 1553, obtained the letter, and inserted it.

To sum up the argument — the balance of evidence is in favor of the presumption that Udall wrote the play for Eton between 1534-41, and that, at some later date, the joke of Custance concerning usury was inserted in it.

## 3. THE SOURCES OF THE PLAY

Udall, in the *Prologue* of *Ralph Roister Doister*, refers to Plautus and Terence, "which among the learned at this day bears the bell." No one familiar with the two playwrights could for a moment be in doubt as to which would be the more likely to prompt imitation, and there was direct evidence of Udall's intimate acquaintance with Terence in his *Flowers for Latin Speaking*. Yet students of Udall's play were long satisfied with regarding *Ralph Roister Doister* as modeled directly upon the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. Possible indebtedness to other plays was suggested, but received scant consideration or none at all. No doubt the later importance of the *Miles Gloriosus* in its influence upon English comedy here served to prejudice judgment.

A study of Udall's play in relation to its sources made by Mr. Maulsby<sup>1</sup> has gone far to establish a more correct view. Admitting that there is justice in placing emphasis upon a single comedy of Plautus, he aimed to show that, none the less, too much stress had been laid upon its influence, and that resemblances "almost if not equally striking," in other plays of both Plautus and Terence, had been left out of account.

There is, in the first place, no general resemblance in plot between *Ralph Roister Doister* and the *Miles Gloriosus*, or any other play of either Plautus or Terence. What is more, the parallelism of special scenes is both rare and remote. An excellent example is the scene in which Ralph and his cohorts, attacking Custance's house, are routed by Custance and her maids — declared by an earlier student of the play, Faust, to be "a copy, neither more nor less," of Scene 1, Act 5, of the *Miles Gloriosus*. The two scenes are, as Maulsby pointed out, "essentially diverse"; a scene in *Rudens* (3, 5) is measurably closer, and a far

<sup>1</sup> "The relation between Udall's *Roister Doister* and the Comedies of Plautus and Terence," *Englische Studien*, 38, 251. See his review of previous literature on the subject.

truer parallel, as had been noted by Habersang, is afforded by the *Eunuchus* of Terence (4, 7), where a similar braggart, Thraso, coming to carry off Pamphila, is forced to flee.

Next may be noted a group of resemblances and differences of a general character, rapidly summarized at the close of Maulsby's article, which fall under the headings of construction, business, scene, and style; the notes on features of character also included by him here will be taken up later. Drinking, quarreling, abuse, good-natured and otherwise, among the servants, is found both in Udall and in the classic comedy; in both servants are rebuked and threatened by their masters. Use of allusive names for characters are found in both; for this, we may interject, Udall did not, of course, need to go to the classic comedy. The plot of *Ralph Roister Doister* is simple, while the Latin plays are full of involved intrigue. Unity of place is observed by Udall, and the three days of his comedy suggest influence of the classic unity of time. The *Prologue* is passably like those of the classic dramas. Thanks upon return from a voyage are a convention in the Latin plays; Suresby's expression of relief at reaching land (4, 1) form a remote parallel. Giving of blows and horse-play occur in the Latin plays. Music and dancing is not unknown. The feast at the end of *Ralph Roister Doister* was perhaps suggested by the feasts with which Latin plays sometimes closed. The scene in Plautus and Terence is commonly the space before two houses, in Udall it is the space before one; this is due, it may be added, to the simplicity of Udall's plot — the Latin playwrights needed two for the convenient carrying on of the intrigues of which their plots consisted. As regards style, passing by what Mr. Maulsby calls "the interesting inquiry concerning the possible effect of the Latin meters upon the English comedy" which he will defer till a "more favorable occasion," the long soliloquies of Udall make the same appeal, in disguise, as the confidential appeals to the audience in the Plautine comedy. A remote parallel for Udall's slight use of dialect is found in the il-



literate mistakes of the clown Stratilax in Plautus. Udall and Plautus both use long-drawn-out explanations, jokes that lose their point by repetition, and a lengthening of the dialogue at expense of delaying the action.

These points, summarized, as Mr. Maulsby summarizes them rapidly, in a single paragraph, will certainly convey a false impression unless the reader is warned to delay judgment; Mr. Maulsby, careful though he is to say that, "numerous as they are," they "do not mean that the Westminster schoolmaster was lacking in a sturdy English nonconformity," by that very statement shows that he gives them too much weight. The list includes both similarities and differences. The similarities are of little significance when, after a careful study of the whole matter, it is perceived that Udall is distinguished by the freedom, and not the mechanical dependence, with which he uses his sources and exemplars. The details of the incidental business, such as drinking, quarreling, reproof of servants, horse-play, singing, and dancing, all existed in English tradition, and are used in a manner thoroughly English and not like the Latin play; Udall can at most have been encouraged or confirmed in his use of them by their use in his sources. The only possibly significant features are these — his observance of the unity of place, though one may surmise this to have been accidental; the use of a *Prologue* and its character possibly; and the feast employed, as sometimes in Latin plays, to bring the play to a close.

Mr. Maulsby's assumption that the meter of *Ralph Roister Doister* shows influence from the Latin comedy may be briefly touched on here. This assumption receives the most explicit statement in the edition of Williams and Robin, in which it is stated that the meter "is an attempt to naturalize the comic iambs and trochaics of Plautus and Terence." Mr. Maulsby was prepared to consider this as a possibility, and even Professor Flügel, who apparently recognizes the meter as traditionally English, though he scans it incorrectly, says that, on the whole, lines of six accents seem to prevail, corresponding to the Middle English Alexandrine, or "in Udall's case perhaps

rather to the classical senarius, to the trimeter of the Roman comedy as understood by Udall." There is no space here, and there is no occasion, to go into the matter in detail. The verse is simply four-stressed tumbling verse of a familiar type as used in earlier English plays; no other scansion of it is possible without impossible wrenching of accents.

Specific passages of dialogue may readily be discovered both in Plautus and Terence which evidently served Udall as models. To those pointed out by his predecessors Maulsby has added others, showing that, in this regard also, as in the case of the material for situations and scenes, there is no reason for assuming a particular indebtedness to the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. But it is possible to go farther than this. After one has read Plautus and Terence through, with the intent to discover features of indebtedness of this kind, one becomes convinced that Udall did not place a selected scene before himself and then set to work to paraphrase it, substituting his own words and allusions and retaining only its general purpose and spirit, — for his independence is such that it is a puzzle to determine which of two or more similar scenes is more probably his source, — but that his indebtedness is rather that of a student of the Latin comedy who knows it so well that he does not rummage out particular scenes for imitation, but writes freely from the general conception of effective scenes and situations floating freely in his mind.<sup>1</sup>

We pass next to the salient fact that Udall broadly modeled the two basic characters of his play, Ralph and Merygreeke, upon typical characters in the Latin Comedy. Ralph is an adaptation of the "*Miles Gloriosus*," so called from the play of that name by Plautus; a notable figure in both Plautus and Terence, and one which, in a much modified form, has played an important part in English comedy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A number of parallels are indicated in the *Notes*; the texts of one or two are given in illustration of Udall's independence.

<sup>2</sup> He first appears in English in *Thersites*, from the school-dialogue of Ravius Textor. Two of the more familiar examples of adaptations of

The "Miles Gloriosus," or "braggart captain," is a swashbuckler, a mass of vanity, the hero of many imaginary feats of impossible valor invented either by himself or by those who prey upon his conceit, but really an arrant coward whose arrogance at once deserts him most ludicrously when confronted with the slightest resistance or show of peril; withal amorous and eager for gallant adventures and easily led to believe himself the admiration and despair of all women who behold him, a trait played upon, of course, by those who make him their dupe. Similarly, Udall's character is a fool, a braggart and yet a coward, a fatuous dupe in his eagerness to play the gallant. But the differences between Ralph and the part he plays and the portrayal in Latin comedy of Pyrgopolinices and other braggart captains is as significant as it is marked. Udall has both simplified and refined the character. The cowardice of Ralph, as Maulsby truly says, is more obvious and more comical. The use made of his gallantry, also, is devoid of offense, and much more effectively comical.

Merygreeke in his turn, who, in Udall's play, avails himself of Ralph's monstrous conceit to his own advantage and involves him in the complications which form the theme of the play, unquestionably represents the typical parasite who is ubiquitous in Latin comedy, but he combines with the parasite the traits of the clever, scheming servant, such as Palæstro and his kind. He is, to quote Maulsby again, "more independent and more aggressive," more of a master mind, more openly contemptuous, and wholly free in the lengths he allows himself to go in derision and horse-play, being always quite sure of his autocratic control of his dupe. And it has been truly observed that his enjoyment of fooling Ralph and the horse-play to which he subjects him count quite as much with Mery-

the character are Sir Thopas in Lyly's *Endimion*, and (at a far remove) Falstaff in Shakespeare. For studies of the character in detail, see J. Thummel, "Der Miles Gloriosus bei Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 13; and Herman Graf, *Der Miles Gloriosus im Englischen Drama*, Rostock, 1891.

greeke as the dinners and other desirable perquisites he obtains by his flatteries. But just as Udall avoided the repulsiveness of the Latin character, so also he avoids grossness in the intrigue involving him and in the manner of his discomfiture; it is all, after all, harmless fooling and good fun. Flügel says admirably that Udall, skillful writer that he was, has carefully avoided the "danger of marring our enjoyment of Merygreeke's part by inserting traits of a finer or grosser brutality," and it is certainly better that Ralph should be left to the last quite satisfied with himself and still an object of unbounded amusement to the merry company about him as they go off to dinner.

To return to Maulsby's admirable article, it is in no spirit of depreciation that it must be pointed out that we must make a more forcible break with the critical tradition which assumes a large degree of dependence of Udall upon his Latin exemplars, or (as it is too easy to assume) a dependence of a mechanical and imitative kind calling merely for cleverness in selecting and patching together material not essentially original. It must again be asserted that, while Maulsby clearly recognizes and affirms that Udall made his play an English play, there is danger in laying stress, as he does, upon "numerous resemblances"; the resemblances are not numerous. The ways in which Udall was influenced are few; the significant fact is that, while few, they are of the greatest importance. The first is that Udall learned from the Roman comedy to make a play with a unified and regulated action. His division of his play into acts and scenes is not a mere formal imitation of his models. He has a definite idea of what belongs to each act. Taking a simple thread of story, he distributes the events it includes so that its interest cumulates in the fourth act and reaches an appropriate solution in the fifth. It was no lack of inventive skill that made him make his plot simple, or discard the wretched hole-and-corner farcicalities and far-fetched devices of the Latin comedy. He has ability enough of his own to diversify his simple theme with incidental action, the fooling of Merygreeke with Ralph, the episode of the mock funeral,

the chatter and quarreling of the maids and varlets. Paradoxically, the very fact that the action is thin in the second act (though reinforced skillfully by incidental episodes) is the best proof that he knew perfectly well what he was about. He would not put into that act what necessarily belonged in the next.

The second indebtedness of importance is his use of the two typical characters of the boastful captain and of the combination of parasite and wily servant. His independence, freedom from any necessity for servile imitation, in this connection has already been indicated.

The fact that Udall drew suggestions from certain scenes, borrowed certain passages, is of course of importance, but relatively of much less importance — it is really a necessary consequence of his adaptation of two chief characters from Latin originals. The extent of his borrowings, which is small, and the substance of the dialogue borrowed, are of no significance, as concerns the history of English drama. What is really of significance is the fact that his indebtedness for special scenes is most vague and remote, so freely has he refashioned the ideas he borrowed, and that the passages of dialogue he imitated are entirely made over, as regards words and allusions, to a fresh and individual form.

This leads to the consideration of the specifically English elements in the comedy. On the one hand, the comedy is, in a word, both in spirit and substance thoroughly English; where there was borrowing, only so much was borrowed as could be made English. If Ralph is a strongly accentuated caricature, just as the various boastful captains are in the Latin comedy, he is none the less in no sense exotic, a figure transferred bodily from its foreign setting and successful because of intrinsic absurdity; all that would have been exotic in Udall's models has been omitted or changed — Ralph was recognizable to an English audience as a delightful exaggeration of a type in real life. Indeed, largely freed as he is of the grotesque and monstrous elements of the Latin character, he is to a very great degree more realistic and probable without any loss of hu-

morous effectiveness, and therefore artistically superior to his artificial and highly seasoned original. The same holds true of Merygreeke. As regards the incidental business of the play, it is hardly necessary to emphasize again the obvious fact that much of it, while apparently paralleled in the Latin comedy, is really traditional in England and English in character, — horse-play, joking and quarreling of servants, and the like — while not a little is absolutely original with Udall in the dramatic use he makes of it. Possessed of a natural dramatic instinct, a very real natural skill and sense of what was useful to his purpose, Udall used and improved upon material already developed in religious play and farce. His delightful picture of Custance's household, of her management, at once strict and gracious of her servants, belongs neither to English tradition nor to Latin exemplars; it anticipates in a remarkable way realistic comedy in its later artistic development.

A word must be added touching the racy, idiomatic English of the play, so full of sparkle and fun (and so free of offense), plainly a free and flexible medium for the author's expression of his characters and action, unstudied and without trace of constraint and awkwardness. Surely, with respect to the abundant and most natural use which Udall makes of proverbs, catch-words, and current slang, a word of protest may be permitted against the view of one of Udall's editors that "*Roister Doister* is largely a cento, though the patchwork is cleverly disguised."<sup>1</sup> This comment is the more strange and unwarranted seeing that a large part of the parallels on which it is based are drawn from literature later than Udall, including such authors as Lyly, Massinger, and Shakespeare; but, apart from these, the parallels from earlier works and authors are merely cases of proverbs and other current phrases, most of them familiar, some of them, indeed, used in Middle English literature. The notion that Udall patched together phrases and allusions from his predecessors — and,

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Williams, *Englische Studien*, 36, 179, an article supplementary to the glossary in the edition by Williams and Robin in the *Temple Dramatists*.

so it would seem, his successors — might hardly seem worthy of comment, were it not that such statements are often accepted and passed on without scrutiny of their truth. It is important that the fact should not be obscured that Udall made his characters talk as people talked in his day — though of course with heightened spirit, point, and pungency.

So far we may go in recognizing the essentially English character of the play. But it does not follow English tradition in respect to structure, the use of conventional types of character, and the like. It is absurd to speak of "medieval elements" in *Ralph Roister Doister* or to regard Merygreeke as a Vice in a thin disguise. Here we are led to the question of the priority of *Roister Doister* as the first "regular drama" in English. Assuming the play to date from Udall's head mastership at Eton, it is still preceded by *Thersites* and *Calisto and Melibea*, but here, as in the case of the Latin plays of Grimald and Buchanan, other criteria than date give it preference. Mr. Schelling has said truly<sup>1</sup> that if by the term "regular drama" we understand a matter of form only, including the division into acts and scenes, regularity may be claimed for this play and several successors, but must be denied to *Thersites* and *Calisto and Melibea*; if we mean by regularity the artistic principle set free and disburdened of religious intent, much might be said for *Thersites*, and indeed in *Calisto* "we have passed out of the atmosphere of both morality and interlude." This is true, but Mr. Schelling is at the moment interested in pointing out that in the general development progress has been made here in this play and there in that. It is necessary to go a step farther and apply in conjunction the criteria which he uses separately. In considering the claims of *Ralph Roister Doister*, it is essential to note not merely that Udall used the formal division into acts and scenes, but that he used that division with a clear understanding as to the proper distribution of his material. It is essential to note not merely that the artistic principle is set free, so that didac-

<sup>1</sup> *Elizabethan Drama*, I, 87 f.

tic purpose no longer dictates selection of content, but that the artistic principle in its newly won freedom does not in Udall's play run to extravagance and absurdity as in *Thersites*, but is working consciously and conscientiously on its chosen material to present a story rationalized and restrained to a definite moderation and decorum, through characters made realistic and effectively vitalized, so that the result is measurably within the bounds of artistic fitness. Regularity we may define as a complex artistic unity of substance and form due to a perception of, and an attainment of, artistic excellencies that are, in the further development of the drama, to justify themselves as of permanent worth. Under this definition, no other play can claim priority over Udall's — even if we were not forced to exclude *Thersites* and *Calisto and Melibea* as following closely their foreign originals while *Ralph Roister Doister* is demonstrably original and English.

But when one considers Udall in relation to his sources and evaluates the amount of his indebtedness justly, when we consider what he took and what he did not take, what he did and what he did not choose to do, when we come to realize the measure of his success, we arrive at a much higher estimate of his powers — which assuredly, considering his historic place, had in them a touch of genius — than if one pays him tribute merely as the author of a play to be considered the first of “regular” English plays.



RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

MATHEW MERYGREEKE

GAWYN GOODLUCK, affianced to Dame Custance

TRISTRAM TRUSTIE, his friend

DOBINET DOUGHTIE, boy to Roister Doister

TOM TRUPENIE, servant to Dame Custance

SYM SURESBY, servant to Goodluck

SCRIVENER

HARPAX

DAME CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE, a widow

MARGERIE MUMBLECRUST, her nurse

TIBET TALKAPACE } her maidens  
ANNOT ALYFACE }

SCENE: London



## THE PROLOGUE

What creature is in health, either young or old,  
But some mirth with modesty will be glad to use? --  
As we in this interlude shall now unfold,  
Wherein all scurrility we utterly refuse,  
Avoiding such mirth wherein is abuse, 5  
Knowing nothing more commendable for a man's re-  
creation  
Than mirth which is used in an honest fashion.

For mirth prolongeth life, and causeth health,  
Mirth recreates our spirits and voideth pensiveness,  
Mirth increaseth amity, not hindering our wealth, 10  
Mirth is to be used both of more and less,  
Being mixed with virtue in decent comeliness,  
As we trust no good nature can gainsay the same;  
Which mirth we intend to use, avoiding all blame.

The wise poets long time heretofore 15  
Under merry comedies secrets did declare,  
Wherein was contained very virtuous lore,  
With mysteries and forewarnings very rare.  
Such to write neither Plautus nor Terence did spare,  
Which among the learned at this day bears the bell;  
These, with such other, therein did excel. 21

Our comedy, or interlude, which we intend to play  
Is named *Roister Doister* indeed,  
Which against the vainglorious doth inveigh,

Whose humour the roisting sort continually doth  
feed. 25

Thus by your patience we intend to proceed  
In this our interlude by God's leave and grace;  
And here I take my leave for a certain space.

FINIS

## ACTUS I, SCÆNA I

MATHEW MERYGREEKE. *He entereth singing.*

As long liveth the merry man, they say,  
As doth the sorry man, and longer, by a day.  
Yet the grasshopper, for all his summer piping,  
Starveth in winter with hungry griping.  
Therefore another said saw doth men advise, 5  
That they be together both merry and wise.  
This lesson must I practise, or else ere long,  
With me, Mathew Merygreeke, it will be wrong.  
Indeed men so call me, for by Him that us bought,  
Whatever chance betide, I can take no thought, 10  
Yet wisdom would that I did myself bethink  
Where to be provided this day of meat and drink —  
For know ye that, for all this merry note of mine,  
He might appose me now that should ask where I dine.  
My living lieth here and there, of God's grace, 15  
Sometime with this good man, sometime in that place;  
Sometime Lewis Loytrer biddeth me come near;  
Somewhiles Watkin Waster maketh us good cheer,  
Sometime Davy Diceplayer, when he hath well cast,  
Keepeth revel rout as long as it will last; 20  
Sometime Tom Titivile maketh us a feast;  
Sometime with Sir Hugh Pye I am a bidden guest;  
Sometime at Nicol Neverthrive's I get a sop;

Sometime I am feasted with Bryan Blinkinsoppe ;  
Sometime I hang on Hankyn Hoddydodie's sleeve ; 25  
But this day on Ralph Roister Doister's, by his leave.  
For, truly, of all men he is my chief banker  
Both for meat and money, and my chief shoot-anchor.  
For, sooth Roister Doister in that he doth say,  
And, require what ye will, ye shall have no nay.    30  
But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,  
That ye may esteem him after his worthiness,  
In these twenty towns, and seek them throughout,  
Is not the like stock whereon to graff a lout.  
All the day long is he facing and craking                    35  
Of his great acts in fighting and fray-making,  
But when Roister Doister is put to his proof,  
To keep the Queen's peace is more for his behoof.  
If any woman smile, or cast on him an eye,  
Up is he to the hard ears in love by and by ;                    40  
And in all the hot haste must she be his wife,  
Else farewell his good days, and farewell his life ;  
Master Ralph Roister Doister is but dead and gone  
Except she on him take some compassion.  
Then chief of counsel must be Mathew Merygreeke, 45  
" What if I for marriage to such an one seek ? "  
Then must I sooth it, whatever it is —  
For what he sayeth or doeth cannot be amiss ;  
Hold up his yea and nay, be his nown white son,  
Praise and roose him well, and ye have his heart won, 50  
For so well liketh he his own fond fashions  
That he taketh pride of false commendations.  
But such sport have I with him as I would not lese,  
Though I should be bound to live with bread and  
cheese.  
For exalt him, and have him as ye lust indeed —    55  
Yea, to hold his finger in a hole for a need.

I can with a word make him fain or loth,  
 I can with as much make him pleased or wroth,  
 I can, when I will, make him merry and glad,  
 I can, when me lust, make him sorry and sad, 60  
 I can set him in hope and eke in despair,  
 I can make him speak rough, and make him speak fair.  
 But I marvel I see him not all this same day;  
 I will seek him out. — But, lo! he cometh this way.  
 I have yond espied him sadly coming, 65  
 And in love, for twenty pound, by his gloming!

## ACTUS I, SCÆNA II

RAFE ROISTER DOISTER. MATHEW MERYGREEKE.

*R. Roister.* Come death when thou wilt, I am weary  
of my life.

*M. Mery.* I told you, I, we should woo another wife.  
[*Aside.*]

*R. Roister.* Why did God make me such a goodly  
person?

*M. Mery.* He is in by the week, we shall have sport  
anon.

*R. Roister.* And where is my trusty friend, Mathew  
Merygreeke? 5

*M. Mery.* I will make as I saw him not, he doth me  
seek.

*R. Roister.* I have him espied me thinketh, yond  
is he.

Ho! Mathew Merygreeke, my friend, a word with thee.

*M. Mery.* I will not hear him, but make as I had  
haste. 9

Farewell all my good friends, the time away doth waste,  
And the tide, they say, tarrieth for no man.



*R. Roister.* Thou must with thy good counsel help me if thou can.

*M. Mery.* God keep thee, worshipful Master Roister Doister,

And fare well thee, lusty Master Roister Doister.

*R. Roister.* I must needs speak with thee a word or twain. 15

*M. Mery.* Within a month or two I will be here again.

Negligence in great affairs, ye know, may mar all.

*R. Roister.* Attend upon me now, and well reward thee I shall.

*M. Mery.* I have take my leave, and the tide is well spent.

*R. Roister.* I die except thou help, I pray thee be content. 20

Do thy part well now, and ask what thou wilt,

For without thy aid my matter is all spilt.

*M. Mery.* Then to serve your turn I will some pains take,

And let all mine own affairs alone for your sake.

*R. Roister.* My whole hope and trust resteth only in thee. 25

*M. Mery.* Then can ye not do amiss, whatever it be.

*R. Roister.* Gramercies, Merygreeke, most bound to thee I am.

*M. Mery.* But up with that heart, and speak out like a ram!

Ye speak like a capon that had the cough now.

Be of good cheer, anon ye shall do well enow. 30

*R. Roister.* Upon thy comfort, I will all things well handle.

*M. Mery.* So, lo, that is a breast to blow out a candle!

But what is this great matter, I would fain know?

We shall find remedy therefore I trow.

Do ye lack money? Ye know mine old offers; 35

Ye have always a key to my purse and coffers.

*R. Roister.* I thank thee! had ever man such a friend!

*M. Mery.* Ye give unto me, I must needs to you lend.

*R. Roister.* Nay, I have money plenty all things to discharge.

*M. Mery.* That knew I right well when I made offer so large. [Aside. 40

[*R. Roister.*] But it is no such matter.

*M. Mery.* What is it then?

Are ye in danger of debt to any man?

If ye be, take no thought nor be not afraid.

Let them hardly take thought how they shall be paid.

*R. Roister.* Tut, I owe nought.

*M. Mery.* What then? fear ye imprisonment?

*R. Roister.* No. 46

*M. Mery.* No, I wist ye offend not, so to be shent.  
But if ye had, the Tower could not you so hold,  
But to break out at all times ye would be bold.

What is it — hath any man threatened you to beat?

*R. Roister.* What is he that durst have put me in that heat? 50

He that beateth me, by His arms, shall well find,  
That I will not be far from him nor run behind.

*M. Mery.* That thing know all men ever since ye overthrew

The fellow of the lion which Hercules slew.

But what is it then?

*R. Roister.* Of love I make my moan. 55

*M. Mery.* “Ah, this foolish-a love, wil’t ne’er let us alone?”

But because ye were refused the last day,  
Ye said ye would ne'er more be entangled that way —  
“I would meddle no more, since I find all so unkind.”

*R. Roister.* Yea, but I cannot so put love out of  
my mind. 60

*M. Mery.* But is your love, tell me first in any  
wise,

In the way of marriage, or of merchandise?

If it may otherwise than lawful be found,

Ye get none of my help for a hundred pound.

*R. Roister.* No, by my troth, I would have her to  
my wife. 65

*M. Mery.* Then are ye a good man, and God save  
your life!

And what or who is she, with whom ye are in love?

*R. Roister.* A woman whom I know not by what  
means to move.

*M. Mery.* Who is it?

*R. Roister.* A woman yond.

*M. Mery.* What is her name?

*R. Roister.* Her yonder.

*M. Mery.* Whom?

*R. Roister.* Mistress — ah —

*M. Mery.* Fie, fie, for shame!

Love ye, and know not whom — but “her yond,” “a  
woman?” 71

We shall then get you a wife, I cannot tell whan.

*R. Roister.* The fair woman, that supped with us  
yesternight,

And I heard her name twice or thrice, and had it  
right.

*M. Mery.* Yea, ye may see ye ne'er take me to good  
cheer with you, — 75

If ye had, I could have told you her name now.

*R. Roister.* I was to blame indeed, but the next time perchance —

And she dwelleth in this house.

*M. Mery.* What, Christian Custance?

*R. Roister.* Except I have her to my wife, I shall run mad.

*M. Mery.* Nay, “unwise” perhaps, but I warrant you for “mad.” 80

*R. Roister.* I am utterly dead unless I have my desire.

*M. Mery.* Where be the bellows that blew this sudden fire?

*R. Roister.* I hear she is worth a thousand pound and more.

*M. Mery.* Yea, but learn this one lesson of me afore —

An hundred pound of marriage-money, doubtless, 85

Is ever thirty pound sterling, or somewhat less ;

So that her thousand pound, if she be thrifty,

Is much near about two hundred and fifty.

Howbeit, woovers and widows are never poor.

*R. Roister.* Is she a widow? I love her better therefore. 90

*M. Mery.* But I hear she hath made promise to another.

*R. Roister.* He shall go without her, and he were my brother!

*M. Mery.* I have heard say, I am right well advised,

That she hath to Gawyn Goodluck promised.

*R. Roister.* What is that Gawyn Goodluck?

*M. Mery.* A merchant-man.

*R. Roister.* Shall he speed afore me? Nay, sir, by sweet Saint Anne! 96

Ah, sir, “‘ Backkare,’ quod Mortimer to his sow,”  
I will have her mine own self I make God avow.  
For I tell thee, she is worth a thousand pound.

*M. Mery.* Yet a fitter wife for your maship might  
be found. 100

Such a goodly man as you might get one with land,  
Besides pounds of gold a thousand and a thousand,  
And a thousand, and a thousand, and a thousand,  
And so to the sum of twenty hundred thousand.  
Your most goodly personage is worthy of no less. 105

*R. Roister.* I am sorry God made me so comely,  
doubtless,

For that maketh me eachwhere so highly favoured,  
And all women on me so enamoured.

*M. Mery.* “Enamoured,” quod you? — have ye spied  
out that?

Ah, sir, marry, now I see you know what is what. 110  
“Enamoured,” ka? marry, sir, say that again,  
But I thought not ye had marked it so plain.

*R. Roister.* Yes, eachwhere they gaze all upon me  
and stare.

*M. Mery.* Yea, Malkyn, I warrant you, as much as  
they dare.

And ye will not believe what they say in the street,  
When your maship passeth by, all such as I meet, 116  
That sometimes I can scarce find what answer to  
make.

“Who is this,” saith one, “Sir Launcelot du Lake?”

“Who is this — great Guy of Warwick?” saith an-  
other.

“No,” say I, “it is the thirteenth Hercules’ brother.”

“Who is this — noble Hector of Troy,” saith the  
third. 121

“No, but of the same nest,” say I, “it is a bird.”

"Who is this — great Goliah, Sampson, or Colbrand?"

"No," say I, "but it is a brute of the Alie Land."

"Who is this — great Alexander, or Charle le  
Maigne?" 125

"No, it is the tenth Worthy," say I to them again. —  
I know not if I said well.

*R. Roister.* Yes, for so I am.

*M. Mery.* Yea, for there were but nine Worthies  
before ye came.

To some others, the third Cato I do you call

And so, as well as I can, I answer them all. 130

"Sir, I pray you, what lord or great gentleman is  
this?"

"Master Ralph Roister Doister, dame," say I, "ywis."

"O Lord," saith she then, "what a goodly man it is.  
Would Christ I had such a husband as he is!"

"O Lord," say some, "that the sight of his face we  
lack!" 135

"It is enough for you," say I, "to see his back.

His face is for ladies of high and noble parages,  
With whom he hardly 'scapeth great marriages" —  
With much more than this, and much otherwise.

*R. Roister.* I can thee thank that thou canst such  
answers devise; 140

But I perceive thou dost me thoroughly know.

*M. Mery.* I mark your manners for mine own learn-  
ing, I trow,

But such is your beauty, and such are your acts,  
Such is your personage, and such are your facts,  
That all women, fair and foul, more and less, 145  
They eye you, they lub you, they talk of you doubt-  
less.

Your p[le]asant look maketh them all merry;  
Ye pass not by, but they laugh till they be weary;

Yea and money could I have, the truth to tell,  
Of many, to bring you that way where they dwell. 150

*R. Roister.* Merygreeke, for this thy reporting well  
of me —

*M. Mery.* What should I else, sir? It is my duty,  
pardee.

*R. Roister.* I promise thou shalt not lack, while I  
have a groat.

*M. Mery.* Faith, sir, and I ne'er had more need of  
a new coat.

*R. Roister.* Thou shalt have one to-morrow, and  
gold for to spend. 155

*M. Mery.* Then I trust to bring the day to a good  
end;

For, as for mine own part, having money enow,  
I could live only with the remembrance of you.  
But now to your widow whom you love so hot.

*R. Roister.* By Cock, thou sayest truth! I had al-  
most forgot. 160

*M. Mery.* What if Christian Custance will not have  
you, what?

*R. Roister.* Have me? Yes, I warrant you, never  
doubt of that;

I know she loveth me, but she dare not speak.

*M. Mery.* Indeed, meet it were some body should  
it break.

*R. Roister.* She looked on me twenty times yester-  
night, 165

And laughed so —

*M. Mery.* That she could not sit upright.

*R. Roister.* No, faith, could she not.

*M. Mery.* No, even such a thing I cast.

*R. Roister.* But for wooing, thou knowest, women  
are shamefast.

But, and she knew my mind, I know she would be  
glad,

And think it the best chance that ever she had. 170

*M. Mery.* To her then like a man, and be bold forth  
to start!

Wooers never speed well that have a false heart.

*R. Roister.* What may I best do?

*M. Mery.* Sir, remain ye awhile [here].

Ere long one or other of her house will appear.

Ye know my mind.

*R. Roister.* Yea, now, hardly, let me alone!

*M. Mery.* In the meantime, sir, if you please, I  
will home, — 176

And call your musicians, for, in this your case,

It would set you forth, and all your wooing grace;

Ye may not lack your instruments to play and sing.

*R. Roister.* Thou knowest I can do that.

*M. Mery.* As well as anything.

Shall I go call your folks, that ye may show a cast? 181

*R. Roister.* Yea, run, I beseech thee, in all pos-  
sible haste.

*M. Mery.* I go. [Exeat.

*R. Roister.* Yea, for I love singing out of measure,  
It comforteth my spirits and doth me great pleasure.

But who cometh forth yond from my sweetheart Cus-  
tance? 185

My matter frameth well, this is a lucky chance.

### ACTUS I, SCÆNA III

MADGE MUMBLECRUST, *spinning on the distaff*. TIBET TALKAPACE,  
*sewing*. ANNOT ALYFACE, *knitting*. R. ROISTER.

*M. Mumble.* If this distaff were spun, Margerie  
Mumblecrust —



*Tib. Talk.* Where good stale ale is, will drink no water, I trust.

*M. Mumble.* Dame Custance hath promised us good ale and white bread.

*Tib. Talk.* If she keep not promise, I will beshrew her head :

But it will be stark night before I shall have done. 5

*R. Roister.* I will stand here awhile, and talk with them anon.

I hear them speak of Custance, which doth my heart good ;

To hear her name spoken doth even comfort my blood.

*M. Mumble.* Sit down to your work, Tibet, like a good girl.

*Tib. Talk.* Nurse, meddle you with your spindle and your whirl! 10

No haste but, good Madge Mumblecrust, for " whip and whur,"

The old proverb doth say, " never made good fur."

*M. Mumble.* Well, ye will sit down to your work anon, I trust.

*Tib. Talk.* " Soft fire maketh sweet malt," good Madge Mumblecrust.

*M. Mumble.* And sweet malt maketh jolly good ale for the nones. 15

*Tib. Talk.* Which will slide down the lane without any bones. [Cantet.

" Old brown bread crusts must have much good mumb-  
bling,

But good ale down your throat hath good easy tumbling."

*R. Roister.* The jolliest wench that ere I heard, little mouse!

May I not rejoice that she shall dwell in my house! 20

*Tib. Talk.* So, sirrah, now this gear beginneth for to frame.

*M. Mumble.* Thanks to God, though your work stand still, your tongue is not lame.

*Tib. Talk.* And though your teeth be gone, both so sharp and so fine,

Yet your tongue can run on pattens as well as mine.

*M. Mumble.* Ye were not for nought named Tib Talkapace. 25

*Tib. Talk.* Doth my talk grieve you? Alack, God save your grace!

*M. Mumble.* I hold a groat ye will drink anon for this gear. [Enter Annot.]

*Tib. Talk.* And I will pray you the stripes for me to bear.

*M. Mumble.* I hold a penny ye will drink without a cup.

*Tib. Talk.* Whereinsoe'er ye drink, I wot ye drink all up. 30

*An. Alyface.* By Cock, and well sewed, my good Tibet Talkapace!

*Tib. Talk.* And e'en as well knit, my nown Annot Alyface.

*R. Roister.* See what a sort she keepeth that must be my wife!

Shall not I, when I have her, lead a merry life?

*Tib. Talk.* Welcome, my good wench, and sit here by me just. 35

*An. Alyface.* And how doth our old beldame here, Madge Mumblecrust?

*Tib. Talk.* Chide, and find faults, and threaten to complain.

*An. Alyface.* To make us poor girls shent to her is small gain.

*M. Mumble.* I did neither chide, nor complain, nor threaten.

*R. Roister.* It would grieve my heart to see one of them beaten. 40

*M. Mumble.* I did nothing but bid her work and hold her peace.

*Tib. Talk.* So would I, if you could your clattering cease —

But the devil cannot make old trot hold her tongue.

*An. Alyface.* Let all these matters pass, and we three sing a song,

So shall we pleasantly both the time beguile now, 45  
And eke dispatch all our works ere we can tell how.

*Tib. Talk.* I shrew them that say nay, and that shall not be I.

*M. Mumble.* And I am well content.

*Tib. Talk.* Sing on then, by and by.

*R. Roister.* And I will not away, but listen to their song,

Yet Merygreeke and my folks tarry very long. 50

[*Tib., An., and Margerie do sing here.*]

Pipe, merry Annot! etc.

Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

Work, Tibet! work, Annot! work, Margerie!

Sew, Tibet! knit, Annot! spin, Margerie!

Let us see who shall win the victory. 55

*Tib. Talk.* This sleeve is not willing to be sewed,  
I throw.

A small thing might make me all in the ground to throw.

[*Then they sing again.*]

Pipe, merry Annot! etc.

Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

What, Tibet! what, Annot! what, Margerie! 60

Ye sleep, but we do not, that shall we try.  
Your fingers be numbed, our work will not lie.

*Tib. Talk.* If ye do so again, well I would advise  
you nay.

In good sooth one stop more, and I make holiday.

[*They sing the third time.*

Pipe, merry Annot! etc. 65

Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

Now, Tibet! now, Annot! now, Margerie!

Now whippet apace for the maistry,

But it will not be, our mouth is so dry.

*Tib. Talk.* Ah, each finger is a thumb to-day, me-  
think; 70

I care not to let all alone, choose it swim or sink.

[*They sing the fourth time.*

Pipe, merry Annot, etc.

Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

When, Tibet? when, Annot? when, Margerie?

I will not, I cannot, no more can I. 75

Then give we all over, and there let it lie.

[*Let her cast down her work.*

*Tib. Talk.* There it lieth; the worst is but a cur-  
ried coat—

Tut, I am used thereto, I care not a groat!

*An. Alyface.* Have we done singing since? Then  
will I in again.

Here I found you, and here I leave both twain. 80

[*Exeat.*

*M. Mumble.* And I will not be long after—Tib  
Talkapace!

*Tib. Talk.* What is the matter?

*M. Mumble.* Yond stood a man all this space  
And hath heard all that ever we spake together.

*Tib. Talk.* Marry, the more lout he for his coming  
hither,  
And the less good he can to listen maidens talk. 85  
I care not, and I go bid him hence for to walk;  
It were well done to know what he maketh herea-  
way.

*R. Roister.* Now might I speak to them, if I wist  
what to say.

*M. Mumble.* Nay, we will go both off, and see what  
he is.

*R. Roister.* One that hath heard all your talk and  
singing, i-wis. 90

*Tib. Talk.* The more to blame you! A good thrifty  
husband  
Would elsewhere have had some better matters in  
hand.

*R. Roister.* I did it for no harm, but for good love  
I bear  
To your dame mistress Custance, I did your talk hear.  
And, mistress nurse, I will kiss you for acquaintance. 95

*M. Mumble.* I come anon, sir.

*Tib. Talk.* Faith, I would our dame Custance  
Saw this gear.

*M. Mumble.* I must first wipe all clean, yea, I must.

*Tib. Talk.* Ill chieve it, doting fool, but it must  
be cust.

*M. Mumble.* God yelde you, sir; chad not so much,  
ichotte not when —

Ne'er since chwas bore, — chwine — of such a gay  
gentleman. 100

*R. Roister.* I will kiss you too, maiden, for the  
good will I bear you.

*Tib. Talk.* No, forsooth, by your leave, ye shall  
not kiss me.

*R. Roister.* Yes, be not afeard, I do not disdain you a whit.

*Tib. Talk.* Why should I fear you? I have not so little wit —

Ye are but a man I know very well.

*R. Roister.* Why then? 105

*Tib. Talk.* Forsooth for I will not! I use not to kiss men.

*R. Roister.* I would fain kiss you too, good maiden, if I might.

*Tib. Talk.* What should that need?

*R. Roister.* But to honour you by this light.  
I use to kiss all them that I love, to God I vow.

*Tib. Talk.* Yea, sir? — I pray you, when did ye last kiss your cow? 110

*R. Roister.* Ye might be proud to kiss me, if ye were wise.

*Tib. Talk.* What promotion were therein?

*R. Roister.* Nurse is not so nice.

*Tib. Talk.* Well, I have not been taught to kissing and licking.

*R. Roister.* Yet I thank you, mistress nurse, ye made no sticking.

*M. Mumble.* I will not stick for a kiss with such a man as you. 115

*Tib. Talk.* They that lust —! I will again to my sewing now. [Enter Annot.]

*An. Alyface.* Tidings, ho! tidings! dame Custance greeteth you well.

*R. Roister.* Whom? me?

*An. Alyface.* You, sir? No, sir! I do no such tale tell.

*R. Roister.* But and she knew me here.

*An. Alyface.* Tibet Talkapace,

Your mistress Custance and mine, must speak with  
your grace. 120

*Tib. Talk.* With me?

*An. Alyface.* Ye must come in to her, out of all  
doubts.

*Tib. Talk.* And my work not half done? A mischief  
on all louts. [*Ex. am.*<sup>1</sup>]

*R. Roister.* Ah, good sweet nurse!

*M. Mumble.* Ah, good sweet gentleman!

*R. Roister.* What?

*M. Mumble.* Nay, I cannot tell, sir, but what thing  
would you?

*R. Roister.* How doth sweet Custance, my heart  
of gold, tell me how? 125

*M. Mumble.* She doth very well, sir, and command  
me to you.

*R. Roister.* To me?

*M. Mumble.* Yea, to you, sir.

*R. Roister.* To me? Nurse, tell me plain,  
To me?

*M. Mumble.* Ye.

*R. Roister.* That word maketh me alive again.

*M. Mumble.* She command me to one, last day,  
whoe'er it was.

*R. Roister.* That was e'en to me and none other,  
by the Mass. 130

*M. Mumble.* I cannot tell you surely, but one it was.

*R. Roister.* It was I and none other; this cometh  
to good pass.

I promise thee, nurse, I favour her.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir.

*R. Roister.* Bid her sue to me for marriage.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir.

<sup>1</sup> *Exeant ambo*, let both go out.

*R. Roister.* And surely for thy sake she shall speed.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir. 135

*R. Roister.* I shall be contented to take her.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir.

*R. Roister.* But at thy request and for thy sake.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir.

*R. Roister.* And come — hark in thine ear what to say.

*M. Mumble.* E'en so, sir.

[Here let him tell her a great long tale in her ear.]

## ACTUS I, SCÆNA IV

MATHEW MERYGREEKE. DOBINET DOUGHTIE. HARPAX. [*Musicians.*]  
RALPH ROISTER. MARGERIE MUMBLECRUST.

*M. Mery.* Come on, sirs, apace, and quit yourselves like men,

Your pains shall be rewarded.

*D. Dough.* But I wot not when.

*M. Mery.* Do your master worship as ye have done in time past.

*D. Dough.* Speak to them; of mine office he shall have a cast.

*M. Mery.* Harpax, look that thou do well too, and thy fellow. 5

*Harpax.* I warrant, if he will mine example follow.

*M. Mery.* Curtsy, whoresons, duck you, and crouch at every word.

*D. Dough.* Yes, whether our master speak earnest or bord.

*M. Mery.* For this lieth upon his preferment indeed.

*D. Dough.* Oft is he a wooer, but never doth he speed.



*M. Mery.* But with whom is he now so sadly round-  
ing yond?

*D. Dough.* With "*Nobs, nicebecetur, miserere*"  
fond.

*M. Mery.* God be at your wedding, be ye sped  
already?

I did not suppose that your love was so greedy.

I perceive now ye have chose of devotion, 15

And joy have ye, lady, of your promotion.

*R. Roister.* Tush, fool, thou art deceived, this is  
not she.

*M. Mery.* Well, mock much of her, and keep her  
well, I 'vise ye.

I will take no charge of such a fair-piece' keeping.

*M. Mumble.* What aileth this fellow? he driveth  
me to weeping. 20

*M. Mery.* What, weep on the wedding day? Be  
merry, woman,

Though I say it, ye have chose a good gentleman.

*R. Roister.* Cocks nouns, what meanest thou, man?  
tut-a-whistle!

*M. Mery.* Ah, sir, be good to her; she is but a  
gristle.

Ah, sweet lamb and coney!

*R. Roister.* Tut, thou art deceived. 25

*M. Mery.* Weep no more, lady, ye shall be well  
received.

Up with some merry noise, sirs, to bring home the  
bride.

*R. Roister.* Gogs arms, knave, art thou mad? I tell  
thee thou art wide.

*M. Mery.* Then ye intend by night to have her  
home brought.

*R. Roister.* I tell thee no.

*M. Mery.* How then?

*R. Roister.* 'T is neither meant ne thought. 30

*M. Mery.* What shall we then do with her?

*R. Roister.* Ah, foolish harebrain,

This is not she.

*M. Mery.* No is! Why then, unsaid again!

And what young girl is this with your maship so bold?

*R. Roister.* A girl?

*M. Mery.* Yea — I dare say, scarce yet three score  
year old.

*R. Roister.* This same is the fair widow's nurse, of  
whom ye wot. 35

*M. Mery.* Is she but a nurse of a house? Hence  
home, old trot,

Hence at once!

*R. Roister.* No, no.

*M. Mery.* What, an please your maship,  
A nurse talk so homely with one of your worship?

*R. Roister.* I will have it so: it is my pleasure and  
will.

*M. Mery.* Then I am content. Nurse, come again,  
tarry still. 40

*R. Roister.* What, she will help forward this my  
suit for her part.

*M. Mery.* Then is 't mine own pigsney, and bless-  
ing on my heart.

*R. Roister.* This is our best friend, man.

*M. Mery.* Then teach her what to say.

*M. Mumble.* I am taught already.

*M. Mery.* Then go, make no delay.

*R. Roister.* Yet hark, one word in thine ear.

*M. Mery.* Back, sirs, from his tail. 45

*R. Roister.* Back, villains, will ye be privy of my  
counsel?

*M. Mery.* Back, sirs, so : I told you afore ye would be shent.

*R. Roister.* She shall have the first day a whole peck of argent.

*M. Mumble.* A peck ! *Nomine Patris*, have ye so much spare ?

*R. Roister.* Yea, and a cart-load thereto, or else were it bare, 50

Besides other moveables, household stuff, and land.

*M. Mumble.* Have ye lands too ?

*R. Roister.* An hundred marks.

*M. Mery.* Yea, a thousand.

*M. Mumble.* And have ye cattle too ? and sheep too ?

*R. Roister.* Yea, a few.

*M. Mery.* He is ashamed the number of them to shew.

E'en round about him, as many thousand sheep goes, 55

As he and thou, and I too, have fingers and toes.

*M. Mumble.* And how many years old be you ?

*R. Roister.* Forty at least.

*M. Mery.* Yea, and thrice forty to them.

*R. Roister.* Nay, now thou dost jest.

I am not so old ; thou misreckonest my years.

*M. Mery.* I know that ; but my mind was on bullocks and steers. 60

*M. Mumble.* And what shall I show her your mastership's name is ?

*R. Roister.* Nay, she shall make suit ere she know that, i-wis.

*M. Mumble.* Yet let me somewhat know.

*M. Mery.* This is he, understand,  
That killed the Blue Spider in Blanchepowder land.

*M. Mumble.* Yea, Jesus, William zee law, did he  
zo, law! 65

*M. Mery.* Yea, and the last elephant that ever he  
saw,

As the beast passed by, he start out of a busk,  
And e'en with pure strength of arms plucked out his  
great tusk.

*M. Mumble.* Jesus, *nomine Patris*, what a thing  
was that!

*R. Roister.* Yea, but, Merygreeke, one thing thou  
hast forgot. 70

*M. Mery.* What?

*R. Roister.* Of th' other elephant.

*M. Mery.* Oh, him that fled away.

*R. Roister.* Yea. 75

*M. Mery.* Yea, he knew that his match was in  
place that day.

Tut, he bet the King of Crickets on Christmas day,  
That he crept in a hole, and not a word to say.

*M. Mumble.* A sore man, by zembletee.

*M. Mery.* Why, he wrung a club  
Once in a fray out of the hand of Belzebug. 76

*R. Roister.* And how when Mumfision — ?

*M. Mery.* Oh, your custreling  
Bore the lantern a-field so before the gosling —  
Nay, that is too long a matter now to be told.  
Never ask his name, nurse, I warrant thee, be bold. 80  
He conquered in one day from Rome to Naples,  
And won towns, nurse, as fast as thou canst make  
apples.

*M. Mumble.* O Lord, my heart quaketh for fear:  
he is too sore.

*R. Roister.* Thou makest her too much afeard,  
Merygreeke, no more.

This tale would fear my sweetheart Custance right  
evil. 85

*M. Mery.* Nay, let her take him, nurse, and fear  
not the devil.

But thus is our song dashed. Sirs, ye may home  
again.

*R. Roister.* No, shall they not. I charge you all  
here to remain —

The villain slaves, a whole day ere they can be  
found.

*M. Mery.* Couch on your marybones, whoresons,  
down to the ground. 90

Was it meet he should tarry so long in one place  
Without harmony of music, or some solace?

Whoso hath such bees as your master in his head  
Had need to have his spirits with music to be fed.

By your mastership's licence —

*R. Roister.* What is that? a mote? 95

*M. Mery.* No, it was a fowl's feather had light on  
your coat.

*R. Roister.* I was nigh no feathers since I came  
from my bed.

*M. Mery.* No, sir, it was a hair that was fall from  
your head.

*R. Roister.* My men come when it please them.

*M. Mery.* By your leave —

*R. Roister.* What is that?

*M. Mery.* Your gown was foul spotted with the  
foot of a gnat. 100

*R. Roister.* Their master to offend they are nothing  
afeard —

What now?

*M. Mery.* A lousy hair from your mastership's  
beard.

*Omnes famuli.*<sup>1</sup> And sir, for nurse's sake, pardon  
this one offence.

We shall not after this show the like negligence.

*R. Roister.* I pardon you this once, and come,  
sing ne'er the worse. 105

*M. Mery.* How like you the goodness of this gentle-  
man, nurse?

*M. Mumble.* God save his mastership that so can  
his men forgive!

And I will hear them sing ere I go, by his leave.

*R. Roister.* Marry, and thou shalt, wench. Come,  
we two will dance!

*M. Mumble.* Nay, I will by mine own self foot the  
song, perchance. 110

*R. Roister.* Go to it, sirs, lustily.

*M. Mumble.* Pipe up a merry note,  
Let me hear it played, I will foot it for a groat.

[*Content.*

*R. Roister.* Now, nurse, take this same letter here  
to thy mistress,

And as my trust is in thee, ply my business.

*M. Mumble.* It shall be done.

*M. Mery.* Who made it?

*R. Roister.* I wrote it each whit. 115

*M. Mery.* Then needs it no mending.

*R. Roister.* No, no.

*M. Mery.* No, I know your wit.

I warrant it well.

*M. Mumble.* It shall be delivered.

But, if ye speed, shall I be considered?

*M. Mery.* Whough! dost thou doubt of that?

*Madge.* What shall I have?

<sup>1</sup> All the serving-men.

*M. Mery.* An hundred times more than thou canst  
devise to crave. 120

*M. Mumble.* Shall I have some new gear?—for  
my old is all spent.

*M. Mery.* The worst kitchen wench shall go in  
ladies' raiment.

*M. Mumble.* Yea?

*M. Mery.* And the worst drudge in the house shall  
go better

Than your mistress doth now.

*Mar.* Then I trudge with your letter.

*R. Roister.* Now, may I repose me — Custance is  
mine own. 125

Let us sing and play homeward that it may be known.

*M. Mery.* But are you sure that your letter is well  
enough?

*R. Roister.* I wrote it myself.

*M. Mery.* Then sing we to dinner.

[Here they sing, and go out singing.]

## ACTUS I, SCÆNA V

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. MARGERIE MUMBLECRUST.

*C. Custance.* Who took thee this letter, Margerie  
Mumblecrust?

*M. Mumble.* A lusty gay bachelor took it me of trust,  
And if ye seek to him he will love your doing.

*C. Custance.* Yea, but where learned he that  
manner of wooing?

*M. Mumble.* If to sue to him, you will any pains take,  
He will have you to his wife, he saith, for my sake. 6

*C. Custance.* Some wise gentleman, belike. I am  
bespoken;  
And I thought verily this had been some token

From my dear spouse, Gawin Goodluck, whom when  
him please,

God luckily send home to both our hearts' ease. 10

*M. Mumble.* A joyly man it is, I wot well by report,  
And would have you to him for marriage resort.

Best open the writing, and see what it doth speak.

*C. Custance.* At this time, nurse, I will neither  
read ne break.

*M. Mumble.* He promised to give you a whole peck  
of gold. 15

*C. Custance.* Perchance, lack of a pint when it  
shall be all told.

*M. Mumble.* I would take a gay rich husband, and  
I were you.

*C. Custance.* In good sooth, Madge, e'en so would  
I, if I were thou.

But no more of this fond talk now — let us go in,  
And see thou no more move me folly to begin. 20  
Nor bring me no more letters for no man's pleasure,  
But thou know from whom.

*M. Mumble.* I warrant ye shall be sure.

## ACTUS II, SCÆNA I

DOBINET DOUGHTIE.

*D. Dough.* Where is the house I go to, before or  
behind?

I know not where nor when nor how I shall it find.  
If I had ten men's bodies and legs and strength,  
This trotting that I have must needs lame me at length.  
And now that my master is new set on wooing, 5  
I trust there shall none of us find lack of doing.  
Two pair of shoes a day will now be too little  
To serve me, I must trot to and fro so mickle.



“Go bear me this token,” “carry me this letter,”  
Now this is the best way, now that way is better. 10  
Up before day, sirs, I charge you, an hour or twain,  
Trudge, “do me this message, and bring word quick  
again.”

If one miss but a minute, then, “His arms and wounds,  
I would not have slacked for ten thousand pounds!  
Nay, see, I beseech you, if my most trusty page 15  
Go not now about to hinder my marriage!”  
So fervent hot wooing, and so far from wiving,  
I trow, never was any creature living.

With every woman is he in some love’s pang,  
Then up to our lute at midnight, twangledom twang, 20  
Then twang with our sonnets, and twang with our  
dumps,

And heigho from our heart, as heavy as lead lumps;  
Then to our recorder with toodleoodle poop,  
As the howlet out of an ivy bush should hoop.

Anon to our gittern, thrumpledum, thrumpledum  
thrum, 25

Thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumple-  
dum, thrum.

Of songs and ballads also he is a maker,  
And that can he as finely do as Jack Raker;  
Yea, and extempore will he ditties compose,  
Foolish Marsyas ne’er made the like, I suppose, 30  
Yet must we sing them, as good stuff I undertake,  
As for such a pen-man is well fitting to make.

“Ah, for these long nights! heigho! when will it be day?  
I fear ere I come she will be wooed away.”

Then when answer is made that it may not be, 35

“O death, why comest thou not by and by?” saith he.  
But then, from his heart to put away sorrow,  
He is as far in with some new love next morrow.

But in the mean season we trudge and we trot.  
From dayspring to midnight I sit not, nor rest not. 40  
And now am I sent to dame Christian Custance,  
But I fear it will end with a mock for pastance.  
I bring her a ring, with a token in a clout,  
And by all guess this same is her house out of doubt.  
I know it now perfect, I am in my right way. 45  
And, lo! yond the old nurse that was with us last day.

## ACTUS II, SCÆNA II

MADGE MUMBLECRUST. DOBINET DOUGHTIE.

*M. Mumble.* I was ne'er so shoke up afore, since I  
was born.

That our mistress could not have chid, I would have  
sworn —

And I pray God I die, if I meant any harm,  
But for my life-time this shall be to me a charm.

*D. Dough.* God you save and see, nurse, and how  
is it with you? 5

*M. Mumble.* Marry, a great deal the worse it is for  
such as thou.

*D. Dough.* For me? Why so?

*M. Mumble.* Why, were not thou one of them, say,  
That sang and played here with the gentleman last day?

*D. Dough.* Yes, and he would know if you have  
for him spoken,

And prays you to deliver this ring and token. 10

*M. Mumble.* Now by the token that God tokened,  
brother,

I will deliver no token, one nor other.

I have once been so shent for your master's pleasure,  
As I will not be again for all his treasure.

*D. Dough.* He will thank you, woman.

*M. Mumble.* I will none of his thank. [*Ex.*]

*D. Dough.* I ween I am a prophet, this gear will  
prove blank: 16

But what, should I home again without answer go?

It were better go to Rome on my head than so.

I will tarry here this month, but some of the house  
Shall take it of me, and then I care not a louse. 20

But yonder cometh forth a wench or a lad,  
If he have not one Lombard's touch, my luck is bad.

## ACTUS II, SCÆNA III

TRUPENIE. D. DOUGHTIE. TIBET TALKAPACE. ANNOT ALYFACE.

*Trupenie.* I am clean lost for lack of merry com-  
pany,

We 'gree not half well within, our wenches and I:  
They will command like mistresses, they will forbid,  
If they be not served, Trupenie must be chid.  
Let them be as merry now as ye can desire, 5  
With turning of a hand, our mirth lieth in the mire.  
I cannot skill of such changeable mettle,  
There is nothing with them but "in dock out nettle."

*D. Dough.* Whether is it better that I speak to  
him first,  
Or he first to me? — It is good to cast the worst. 10  
If I begin first, he will smell all my purpose,  
Otherwise I shall not need anything to disclose.

*Trupenie.* What boy have we yonder? I will see  
what he is.

*D. Dough.* He cometh to me. It is hereabout, i-wis.

*Trupenie.* Wouldest thou ought, friend, that thou  
lookest so about? 15

*D. Dough.* Yea, but whether ye can help me or no,  
I doubt.

I seek to one mistress Custance house here dwelling.

*Trupenie.* It is my mistress ye seek to, by your  
telling.

*D. Dough.* Is there any of that name here but she?

*Trupenie.* Not one in all the whole town that I  
know, pardee. 20

*D. Dough.* A widow she is, I trow.

*Trupenie.* And what and she be?

*D. Dough.* But ensured to an husband.

*Trupenie.* Yea, so think we.

*D. Dough.* And I dwell with her husband that  
trusteth to be.

*Trupenie.* In faith, then must thou needs be welcome  
to me —

Let us for acquaintance shake hands together, 25  
And whate'er thou be, heartily welcome hither.

*Enter TIBET and ANNOT*

*Tib. Talk.* Well, Trupenie, never but flinging?

*An. Alyface.* And frisking?

*Trupenie.* Well, Tibet and Annot, still swinging  
and whisking?

*Tib. Talk.* But ye roil abroad —

*An. Alyface.* In the street everywhere.

*Trupenie.* Where are ye twain — in chambers —  
when ye meet me there? 30

But come hither, fools, I have one now by the hand,  
Servant to him that must be our mistress' husband,  
Bid him welcome.

*An. Alyface.* To me truly is he welcome.

*Tib. Talk.* Forsooth, and as I may say, heartily  
welcome.

*D. Dough.* I thank you, mistress maids.

*An. Alyface.* I hope we shall better know. 35

*Tib. Talk.* And when will our new master come?

*D. Dough.* Shortly, I trow.

*Tib. Talk.* I would it were to-morrow: for till he resort,

Our mistress, being a widow, hath small comfort;  
And I heard our nurse speak of an husband to-day  
Ready for our mistress, a rich man and a gay. 40

And we shall go in our French hoods every day,  
In our silk cassocks (I warrant you) fresh and gay,  
In our trick ferdegews and biliments of gold;  
Brave in our suits of change, seven double fold  
Then shall ye see Tibet, sirs, tread the moss so  
trim — 45

Nay, why said I "tread"? — ye shall see her glide  
and swim,

Not lumpерdee, clumperdee, like our spaniel Rig.

*Trupenie.* Marry, then, prick-me-dainty, come toast  
me a fig!

Who shall then know our Tib Talkapace, trow ye?

*An. Alyface.* And why not Annot Alyface as fine  
as she? 50

*Trupenie.* And what had Tom Trupenie, a father  
or none?

*An. Alyface.* Then our pretty new-come man will  
look to be one.

*Trupenie.* We four, I trust, shall be a joyly merry  
knot.

Shall we sing a fit to welcome our friend, Annot?

*An. Alyface.* Perchance he cannot sing.

*D. Dough.* I am at all assays. 55

*Tib. Talk.* By Cock, and the better welcome to us  
always. [Here they sing.

A thing very fit  
For them that have wit,  
And are fellows knit  
Servants in one house to be, 60  
Is fast for to sit,  
And not oft to flit,  
Nor vary a whit,  
But lovingly to agree.

No man complaining, 65  
No other disdaining,  
For loss or for gaining,  
But fellows or friends to be.  
No grudge remaining,  
No work refraining, 70  
Nor help restraining,  
But lovingly to agree.

No man for despite,  
By word or by write  
His fellow to twite, 75  
But further in honesty,  
No good turns entwite,  
Nor old sores recite,  
But let all go quite,  
And lovingly to agree. 80

After drudgery,  
When they be weary,  
Then to be merry,  
To laugh and sing, they be free —  
With chip and cherry, 85  
Heigh derry derry,  
Trill on the berry —  
And lovingly to agree.

*Finis.*

*Tib. Talk.* Will you now in with us unto our mistress go?

*D. Dough.* I have first for my master an errand or two. 90

But I have here from him a token and a ring,  
They shall have most thank of her that first doth it bring.

*Tib. Talk.* Marry, that will I!

*Trupenie.* See and Tibet snatch not now.

*Tib. Talk.* And why may not I, sir, get thanks as well as you? [*Exeat.*

*An. Alyface.* Yet get ye not all, we will go with you both, 95

And have part of your thanks, be ye never so loth.

[*Exeant omnes.*

*D. Dough.* So my hands are rid of it, I care for no more.

I may now return home, so durst I not afore. [*Exeat.*

## ACTUS II, SCÆNA IV

C. CUSTANCE. TIBET. ANNOT ALYFACE. TRUPENIE.

*C. Custance.* Nay, come forth all three; and come hither, pretty maid.

Will not so many forewarnings make you afraid?

*Tib. Talk.* Yes, forsooth.

*C. Custance.* But still be a runner up and down,  
Still be a bringer of tidings and tokens to town.

*Tib. Talk.* No, forsooth, mistress.

*C. Custance.* Is all your delight and joy 5  
In whisking and ramping abroad like a tom-boy?

*Tib. Talk.* Forsooth, these were there too, Annot and Trupenie.

*Trupenie.* Yea, but ye alone took it, ye cannot deny.

*An. Alyface.* Yea, that ye did.

*Tibet.* But if I had not, ye twain would.

*C. Custance.* You great calf, ye should have more wit, so ye should; 10

But why should any of you take such things in hand?

*Tibet.* Because it came from him that must be your husband.

*C. Custance.* How do ye know that?

*Tibet.* Forsooth, the boy did say so.

*C. Custance.* What was his name?

*An. Alyface.* We asked not.

*C. Custance.* No?

*An. Alyface.* He is not far gone, of likelihood.

*Trupenie.* I will see. 15

*C. Custance.* If thou canst find him in the street, bring him to me.

*Trupenie.* Yes. [Exeat.]

*C. Custance.* Well, ye naughty girls, if ever I perceive

That henceforth you do letters or tokens receive,  
To bring unto me from any person or place,  
Except ye first show me the party face to face, 20  
Either thou or thou, full truly abyed thou shalt.

*Tibet.* Pardon this, and the next time powder me in salt.

*C. Custance.* I shall make all girls by you twain to beware.

*Tibet.* If ever I offend again, do not me spare!  
But if ever I see that false boy any more 25  
By your mistressship's licence, I tell you afore,  
I will rather have my coat twenty times swinged,  
Than on the naughty wag not to be avenged.

*C. Custance.* Good wenches would not so ramp abroad idly, 29



But keep within doors, and ply their work earnestly.  
If one would speak with me that is a man likely,  
Ye shall have right good thank to bring me word  
quickly.

But otherwise with messages to come in post  
From henceforth, I promise you, shall be to your  
cost.

Get you in to your work. 35

*Tibet.* Yes, forsooth.

*C. Custance.* Hence, both twain.

And let me see you play me such a part again.

*Re-enter TRUPENIE.*

*Trupenie.* Mistress, I have run past the far end of  
the street,

Yet can I not yonder crafty boy see nor meet.

*C. Custance.* No?

*Trupenie.* Yet I looked as far beyond the people,  
As one may see out of the top of Paul's steeple. 41

*C. Custance.* Hence, in at doors, and let me no  
more be vexed.

*Trupenie.* Forgive me this one fault, and lay on for  
the next. [Exeat.

*C. Custance.* Now will I in too, for I think, so  
God me mend,

This will prove some foolish matter in the end. 45  
[Exeat.

### ACTUS III, SCÆNA I

MATHEW MERYGREEKE.

*M. Mery.* Now say this again — he hath somewhat  
to doing

Which followeth the trace of one that is wooing,

Specially that hath no more wit in his head,  
 Than my cousin Roister Doister withal is led.  
 I am sent in all haste to espy and to mark 5  
 How our letters and tokens are likely to wark.  
 Master Roister Doister must have answer in haste,  
 For he loveth not to spend much labour in waste.  
 Now as for Christian Custance, by this light,  
 Though she had not her troth to Gawin Goodluck  
     plight, 10  
 Yet rather than with such a loutish dolt to marry,  
 I daresay would live a poor life solitary.  
 But fain would I speak with Custance, if I wist how,  
 To laugh at the matter — yond cometh one forth  
     now.

## ACTUS III, SCÆNA II

TIBET. M. MERYGREEKE. CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE.

*Tib. Talk.* Ah, that I might but once in my life have  
     a sight

Of him that made us all so ill shent — by this light,  
 He should never escape if I had him by the ear,  
 But even from his head I would it bite or tear!

Yea, and if one of them were not enow, 5  
 I would bite them both off, I make God avow!

*M. Mery.* What is he, whom this little mouse doth  
     so threaten?

*Tib. Talk.* I would teach him, I trow, to make girls  
     shent or beaten!

*M. Mery.* I will call her. Maid, with whom are ye  
     so hasty?

*Tib. Talk.* Not with you, sir, but with a little  
     wagpasty, 10

A deceiver of folks by subtle craft and guile.

*M. Mery.* I know where she is — Dobinet hath wrought somewile.

*Tib. Talk.* He brought a ring and token which he said was sent

From our dame's husband, but I wot well I was shent —

For it liked her as well, to tell you no lies, 15

As water in her ship, or salt cast in her eyes;

And yet whence it came neither we nor she can tell.

*M. Mery.* We shall have sport anon — I like this very well!

And dwell ye here with mistress Custance, fair maid?

*Tib. Talk.* Yea, marry do I, sir — what would ye have said? 20

*M. Mery.* A little message unto her by word of mouth.

*Tib. Talk.* No messages, by your leave, nor tokens forsooth.

*M. Mery.* Then help me to speak with her.

*Tib. Talk.* With a good will that.

Here she cometh forth. Now speak ye know best what.

*C. Custance.* None other life with you, maid, but abroad to skip? 25

*Tib. Talk.* Forsooth, here is one would speak with your mistress-ship.

*C. Custance.* Ah, have ye been learning of mo messages now?

*Tib. Talk.* I would not hear his mind, but bade him show it to you.

*C. Custance.* In at doors.

*Tib. Talk.* I am gone. [Ex.

*M. Mery.* Dame Custance, God ye save.

*C. Custance.* Welcome, friend Merygreeke — and what thing would ye have? 30

*M. Mery.* I am come to you a little matter to break.

*C. Custance.* But see it be honest, else better not to speak.

*M. Mery.* How feel ye yourself affected here of late?

*C. Custance.* I feel no manner change but after the old rate.

But whereby do ye mean?

*M. Mery.* Concerning marriage. 35  
Doth not love lade you?

*C. Custance.* I feel no such carriage.

*M. Mery.* Do ye feel no pangs of dotage? answer me right.

*C. Custance.* I dote so, that I make but one sleep all the night.

But what need all these words?

*M. Mery.* Oh, Jesus, will ye see  
What dissembling creatures these same women be? 40  
The gentleman ye wot of, whom ye do so love  
That ye would fain marry him, if ye durst it move,  
“Among other rich widows, which are of him glad,”  
Lest ye, for lesing of him, perchance might run  
mad,

Is now contented that, upon your suit-making, 45  
Ye be as one in election of taking.

*C. Custance.* What a tale is this? “that I wote of?” “whom I love?”

*M. Mery.* Yea, and he is as loving a worm, again,  
as a dove.

E’en of very pity he is willing you to take,  
Because ye shall not destroy yourself for his sake. 50

*C. Custance.* Marry, God yield his maship what-  
ever he be.

It is gentmanly spoken.

*M. Mery.* Is it not, trow ye?  
If ye have the grace now to offer yourself, ye speed.

*C. Custance.* As much as though I did — this time  
it shall not need.

But what gentman is it, I pray you tell me plain, 55  
That wooeth so finely?

*M. Mery.* Lo, where ye be again,  
As though ye knew him not.

*C. Custance.* Tush, ye speak in jest.

*M. Mery.* Nay sure, the party is in good knocking  
earnest,

And have you he will, he saith, and have you he must.

*C. Custance.* I am promised during my life; that  
is just. 60

*M. Mery.* Marry so thinketh he, unto him alone.

*C. Custance.* No creature hath my faith and troth  
but one,

That is Gawyn Goodluck, and, if it be not he,  
He hath no title this way whatever he be, 64

Nor I know none to whom I have such word spoken.

*M. Mery.* Ye know him not, you, by his letter and  
token?

*C. Custance.* Indeed true it is, that a letter I have,  
But I never read it yet, as God me save.

*M. Mery.* Ye a woman, and your letter so long  
unread?

*C. Custance.* Ye may thereby know what haste I  
have to wed. 70

But now who it is, for my hand I know by guess.

*M. Mery.* Ah, well I say!

*C. Custance.* It is Roister Doister, doubtless.

*M. Mery.* Will ye never leave this dissimulation?  
Ye know him not?

*C. Custance.* But by imagination,

For no man there is but a very dolt and lout 75  
That to woo a widow would so go about.

He shall never have me his wife while he do live.

*M. Mery.* Then will he have you if he may, so  
mote I thrive,

And he biddeth you send him word by me,  
That ye humbly beseech him, ye may his wife be, 80  
And that there shall be no let in you nor mistrust,  
But to be wedded on Sunday next if he lust,  
And biddeth you to look for him.

*C. Custance.* Doth he bid so?

*M. Mery.* When he cometh, ask him whether he  
did or no.

*C. Custance.* Go say that I bid him keep him  
warm at home, 85

For if he come abroad, he shall cough me a mome;  
My mind was vexed, I shrew his head, sottish  
dolt!

*M. Mery.* He hath in his head—

*C. Custance.* As much brain as a burbolt.

*M. Mery.* Well, dame Custance, if he hear you  
thus play choploge—

*C. Custance.* What will he?

*M. Mery.* Play the devil in the horologe. 90

*C. Custance.* I defy him, lout.

*M. Mery.* Shall I tell him what ye say?

*C. Custance.* Yea, and add whatsoever thou canst,  
I thee pray.

And I will avouch it, whatsoever it be.

*M. Mery.* Then let me alone—we will laugh well,  
ye shall see,

It will not be long ere he will hither resort. 95

*C. Custance.* Let him come when him lust, I wish  
no better sport.

Fare ye well, I will in, and read my great letter.  
I shall to my wooer make answer the better.

[*Exeat.*

## ACTUS III, SCÆNA III

MATHEW MERYGREEKE. ROISTER DOISTER.

*M. Mery.* Now that the whole answer in my device  
doth rest,

I shall paint out our wooer in colours of the best,  
And all that I say shall be on Custance's mouth;  
She is author of all that I shall speak forsooth.  
But yond cometh Roister Doister now in a trance. 5

*R. Roister.* Juno send me this day good luck and  
good chance!

I cannot but come see how Merygreeke doth speed.

*M. Mery.* I will not see him, but give him a jut  
indeed.

I cry your mastership mercy.

*R. Roister.* And whither now?

*M. Mery.* As fast as I could run, sir, in post against  
you. 10

But why speak ye so faintly, or why are ye so sad?

*R. Roister.* Thou knowest the proverb—because  
I cannot be had.

Hast thou spoken with this woman?

*M. Mery.* Yea, that I have.

*R. Roister.* And what will this gear be?

*M. Mery.* No, so God me save.

*R. Roister.* Hast thou a flat answer?

*M. Mery.* Nay, a sharp answer.

*R. Roister.* What? 15

*M. Mery.* Ye shall not, she saith, by her will marry  
her cat.

Ye are such a calf, such an ass, such a block,  
Such a lilburn, such a hoball, such a lobcock,  
And because ye should come to her at no season,  
She despised your maship out of all reason. 20

“Bawawe what ye say,” ko I, “of such a gentman.”  
“Nay, I fear him not,” ko she, “do the best he can.

He vaunteth himself for a man of prowess great,  
Whereas a good gander, I daresay, may him beat.  
And where he is louted and laughed to scorn, 25  
For the veriest dolt that ever was born,

And veriest lover, sloven and beast,  
Living in this world from the west to the east:  
Yet of himself hath he such opinion,  
That in all the world is not the like minion. 30

He thinketh each woman to be brought in dotage  
With the only sight of his goodly personage.  
Yet none that will have him — we do him lout and  
flock,

And make him among us our common sporting  
stock,

And so would I now,” ko she, “save only because.” 35  
“Better nay,” ko I, “I lust not meddle with daws.  
Ye are happy,” ko I, “that ye are a woman.

This would cost you your life in case ye were a man.”

*R. Roister.* Yea, an hundred thousand pound  
should not save her life!

*M. Mery.* No, but that ye woo her to have her to  
your wife — 40

But I could not stop her mouth.

*R. Roister.* Heigh ho, alas!

*M. Mery.* Be of good cheer, man, and let the world  
pass.

*R. Roister.* What shall I do or say now that it will  
not be?



*M. Mery.* Ye shall have choice of a thousand as good as she,

And ye must pardon her ; it is for lack of wit. 45

*R. Roister.* Yea, for were not I an husband for her fit? Well, what should I now do?

*M. Mery.* In faith I cannot tell.

*R. Roister.* I will go home and die.

*M. Mery.* Then shall I bid toll the bell?

*R. Roister.* No.

*M. Mery.* God have mercy on your soul, ah, good gentleman,

That e'er ye should th[u]s die for an unkind woman. 50  
Will ye drink once ere ye go?

*R. Roister.* No, no, I will none.

*M. Mery.* How feel your soul to God?

*R. Roister.* I am nigh gone.

*M. Mery.* And shall we hence straight?

*R. Roister.* Yea.

*M. Mery.* *Placebo dilexi.* [ut infra.<sup>1</sup>

Master Roister Doister will straight go home and die.

*R. Roister.* Heigh-ho! Alas, the pangs of death  
my heart do break! 55

*M. Mery.* Hold your peace for shame, sir, a dead man may not speak!

*Nequando.*— What mourners and what torches shall we have?

*R. Roister.* None.

*M. Mery. Dirige.* He will go darkling to his grave,  
*Neque lux, neque crux, neque* mourners, *neque* clink,  
He will steal to heaven, unknowing to God, I think, 60  
*A porta inferi.* Who shall your goods possess?

*R. Roister.* Thou shalt be my sectour, and have all more and less.

<sup>1</sup> As below (referring to the Psalmody at the end of the play).

*M. Mery. Requiem æternam.*—Now, God reward  
your mastership.

And I will cry halfpenny-dole for your worship.  
Come forth, sirs, hear the doleful news I shall you  
tell. [*Evocat servos militis.*<sup>1</sup> 65

Our good master here will no longer with us dwell,  
But in spite of Custance, which hath him wearied,  
Let us see his maship solemnly buried.  
And while some piece of his soul is yet him within,  
Some part of his funerals let us here begin. 70  
*Audivi vocem.* All men take heede by this one gentle-  
man,

How you set your love upon an unkind woman.  
For these women be all such mad peevish elves,  
They will not be won except it please themselves.  
But in faith, Custance, if ever ye come in hell, 75  
Master Roister Doister shall serve you as well!  
And will ye needs go from us thus in very deed?

*R. Roister.* Yea, in good sadness.

*M. Mery.* Now, Jesus Christ be your speed.  
Good-night, Roger, old knave! farewell, Roger, old  
knave! 79

Good-night, Roger, old knave! knave, knap! [*ut infra.*  
Pray for the late master Roister Doister's soul,  
And come forth, parish clerk, let the passing bell toll.  
[*Ad servos militis.*

Pray for your master, sirs, and for him ring a peal.  
He was your right good master while he was in heal.  
*Qui Lazarum.*

*R. Roister.* Heigh-ho!

*M. Mery.* Dead men go not so fast 85  
*In Paradisum.*

<sup>1</sup> He calls up the servants of the Miles Gloriosus, or Braggart Captain, i.e., Roister Doister.

*R. Roister.* Heigh-ho!

*M. Mery.* Soft, hear what I have cast.

*R. Roister.* I will hear nothing, I am past.

*M. Mery.* Whough, wellaway!

Ye may tarry one hour, and hear what I shall say,

Ye were best, sir, for a while to revive again,

And quite them ere ye go.

*R. Roister.* Trowest thou so?

*M. Mery.* Yea, plain! 90

*R. Roister.* How may I revive, being now so far past?

*M. Mery.* I will rub your temples, and fet you again  
at last.

*R. Roister.* It will not be possible.

*M. Mery.* Yes, for twenty pound.

*R. Roister.* Arms, what dost thou?

*M. Mery.* Fet you again out of your sound.

By this cross ye were nigh gone indeed, I might feel 95

Your soul departing within an inch of your heel.

Now follow my counsel.

*R. Roister.* What is it?

*M. Mery.* If I were you,

Custance should eft seek to me, ere I would bow.

*R. Roister.* Well, as thou wilt have me, even so  
will I do.

*M. Mery.* Then shall ye revive again for an hour  
or two. 100

*R. Roister.* As thou wilt, I am content for a little  
space.

*M. Mery.* "Good hap is not hasty, yet in space  
cometh grace."

To speak with Custance yourself should be very well,

What good thereof may come, nor I nor you can tell.

But now the matter standeth upon your marriage, 105

Ye must now take unto you a lusty courage.

Ye may not speak with a faint heart to Custance,  
 But with a lusty breast and countenance,  
 That she may know she hath to answer to a man.

*R. Roister.* Yes, I can do that as well as any can. 110

*M. Mery.* Then because ye must Custance face to  
 face woo,

Let us see how to behave yourself ye can do.

Ye must have a portly brag after your estate.

*R. Roister.* Tush, I can handle that after the best  
 rate.

*M. Mery.* Well done! so lo, up man with your  
 head and chin, 115

Up with that snout, man! So, lo, now ye begin! —  
 So, that is something like — but, pranky cote, neigh  
 whan!

That is a lusty brute — hands under your side,  
 man!

So, lo, now is it even as it should be —

That is somewhat like, for a man of your degree. 120

Then must ye stately go, jetting up and down.

Tut, can ye no better shake the tail of your gown?

There, lo, such a lusty brag it is ye must make.

*R. Roister.* To come behind, and make curtsy,  
 thou must some pains take.

*M. Mery.* Else were I much to blame, I thank your  
 mastership. 125

The Lord one day all-to-begrime you with worship!

Back, Sir Sauce, let gentlefolks have elbow room,

Void, sirs, see ye not master Roister Doister come?

Make place, my masters.

*R. Roister.* Thou jostlest now too nigh.

*M. Mery.* Back, all rude louts!

*R. Roister.* Tush!

*M. Mery.* I cry your maship mercy. 130

Heyday — if fair fine mistress Custance saw you now,  
Ralph Roister Doister were her own, I warrant you.

*R. Roister.* Ne'er an M. by your girdle?

*M. Mery.* Your Good Mastership's  
Mastership were her own Mistress-ship's Mistress-ship!  
Ye were take up for hawks, ye were gone, ye were  
gone! 135

But now one other thing more yet I think upon.

*R. Roister.* Show what it is.

*M. Mery.* A wooer, be he never so poor,  
Must play and sing before his best-beloved's door,  
How much more, then, you?

*R. Roister.* Thou speakest well, out of doubt.

*M. Mery.* And perchance that would make her the  
sooner come out. 140

*R. Roister.* Go call my musicians, bid them hie  
apace.

*M. Mery.* I will be here with them ere ye can say  
"Treyace." [Exeat. 145

*R. Roister.* This was well said of Merygreeke, I'low  
his wit.

Before my sweetheart's door we will have a fit,  
That if my love come forth, that I may with her  
talk, 145

I doubt not but this gear shall on my side walk.

But, lo, how well Merygreeke is returned sence.

[Re-enter MERYGREEKE.

*M. Mery.* There hath grown no grass on my heel  
since I went hence,  
Lo, here have I brought that shall make you past-  
ance.

*R. Roister.* Come, sirs, let us sing to win my dear  
love Custance. 150

[Content.

*M. Mery.* Lo, where she cometh, some countenance  
to her make,  
And ye shall hear me be plain with her for your  
sake.

### ACTUS III, SCÆNA IV

CUSTANCE. MERYGREEKE. ROISTER DOISTER.

*C. Custance.* What gauding and fooling is this  
afore my door?

*M. Mery.* May not folks be honest, pray you,  
though they be poor?

*C. Custance.* As that thing may be true, so rich  
folks may be fools.

*R. Roister.* Her talk is as fine as she had learned  
in schools.

*M. Mery.* Look partly toward her, and draw a  
little near. 5

*C. Custance.* Get ye home, idle folks!

*M. Mery.* Why, may not we be here?  
Nay, and ye will ha'ze, ha'ze — otherwise, I tell you  
plain,

And ye will not ha'ze, then give us our gear again.

*C. Custance.* Indeed I have of yours much gay  
things, God save all.

*R. Roister.* Speak gently unto her, and let her  
take all. 10

*M. Mery.* Ye are too tender-hearted: shall she  
make us daws?

Nay, dame, I will be plain with you in my friend's  
cause.

*R. Roister.* Let all this pass, sweetheart, and ac-  
cept my service.

*C. Custance.* I will not be served with a fool in no wise.

When I choose an husband I hope to take a man. 15

*M. Mery.* And where will ye find one which can do that he can?

Now this man toward you being so kind,  
You not to make him an answer somewhat to his mind!

*C. Custance.* I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?

*M. Mery.* And I reported it.

*C. Custance.* Nay, I must speak it again. 20

*R. Roister.* No, no, he told it all.

*M. Mery.* Was I not meetly plain?

*R. Roister.* Yes.

*M. Mery.* But I would not tell all; for faith, if I had,

With you, dame Custance, ere this hour it had been bad,  
And not without cause — for this goodly personage  
Meant no less than to join with you in marriage. 25

*C. Custance.* Let him waste no more labour nor suit about me.

*M. Mery.* Ye know not where your preferment lieth, I see,

He sending you such a token, ring and letter.

*C. Custance.* Marry, here it is — ye never saw a better.

*M. Mery.* Let us see your letter.

*C. Custance.* Hold, read it if ye can, 30  
And see what letter it is to win a woman.

*M. Mery.* "To mine own dear coney-bird, sweet-heart, and pigsney,  
Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by."  
Of this superscription do ye blame the style?

*C. Custance.* With the rest as good stuff as ye  
read a great while. 35

*M. Mery.* "Sweet mistress, where as I love you  
nothing at all —

Regarding your substance and riches chief of all —  
For your personage, beauty, demeanour and wit,  
I commend me unto you never a whit. —

Sorry to hear report of your good welfare, 40

For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,

That ye be worthy favour of no living man,

To be abhorred of every honest man,

To be taken for a woman inclined to vice,

Nothing at all to virtue giving her due price. — 45

Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought

Such a fine paragon, as ne'er honest man bought. —

And now by these presents I do you advertise

That I am minded to marry you in no wise. —

For your goods and substance, I could be content 50

To take you as ye are. If ye mind to be my wife,

Ye shall be assured, for the time of my life,

I will keep you right well from good raiment and  
fare —

Ye shall not be kept but in sorrow and care —

Ye shall in no wise live at your own liberty. 55

Do and say what ye lust, ye shall never please me ;

But when ye are merry, I will be all sad ;

When ye are sorry, I will be very glad ;

When ye seek your heart's ease, I will be unkind ;

At no time in me shall ye much gentleness find, 60

But all things contrary to your will and mind,

Shall be done — otherwise I will not be behind

To speak. And as for all them that would do you  
wrong,

I will so help and maintain, ye shall not live long —



Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you but I. 65  
I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die.

Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord you save and  
keep;

From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep —  
Who favoureth you no less, ye may be bold,

Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold." 70

*C. Custance.* How by this letter of love? is it not  
fine?

*R. Roister.* By the arms of Caleys, it is none of  
mine.

*M. Mery.* Fie, you are foul to blame, this is your  
own hand!

*C. Custance.* Might not a woman be proud of such  
an husband?

*M. Mery.* Ah, that ye would in a letter show such  
despite! 75

*R. Roister.* Oh, I would I had him here, the which  
did it endite!

*M. Mery.* Why, ye made it yourself, ye told me, by  
this light.

*R. Roister.* Yea, I meant I wrote it mine own self  
yesternight.

*C. Custance.* I-wis, sir, I would not have sent you  
such a mock.

*R. Roister.* Ye may so take it, but I meant it not  
so, by Cock. 80

*M. Mery.* Who can blame this woman to fume and  
fret and rage?

Tut, tut! yourself now have marred your own marriage.  
Well, yet mistress Custance, if ye can this remit,  
This gentleman otherwise may your love requit.

*C. Custance.* No, God be with you both, and seek  
no more to me. [Exeat.

*R. Roister.* Wough! she is gone for ever, I shall  
her no more see. 86

*M. Mery.* What, weep? Fie, for shame! And blubber?  
For manhood's sake,

Never let your foe so much pleasure of you take.

Rather play the man's part, and do love refrain.

If she despise you, e'en despise ye her again. 90

*R. Roister.* By Goss, and for thy sake I defy her  
indeed.

*M. Mery.* Yea, and perchance that way ye shall  
much sooner speed,

For one mad property these women have in fey,

When ye will, they will not, will not ye, then will they.

Ah, foolish woman! ah, most unlucky Custance! 95

Ah, unfortunate woman! ah, peevish Custance!

Art thou to thine harms so obstinately bent,

That thou canst not see where lieth thine high preferment?

Canst thou not lub dis man, which could lub dee so  
well?

Art thou so much thine own foe?

*R. Roister.* Thou dost the truth tell. 100

*M. Mery.* Well I lament.

*R. Roister.* So do I.

*M. Mery.* Wherefore?

*R. Roister.* For this thing.

Because she is gone.

*M. Mery.* I mourn for another thing.

*R. Roister.* What is it, Merygreeke, wherefore  
thou dost grief take?

*M. Mery.* That I am not a woman myself for your  
sake,

I would have you myself, and a straw for yond gill, 105  
And mock much of you, though it were against my will.

I would not, I warrant you, fall in such a rage,  
As so to refuse such a goodly personage.

*R. Roister.* In faith, I heartily thank thee, Mery-greeke.

*M. Mery.* And I were a woman —

*R. Roister.* Thou wouldest to me seek. 110

*M. Mery.* For, though I say it, a goodly person ye be.

*R. Roister.* No, no.

*M. Mery.* Yes, a goodly man as e'er I did see.

*R. Roister.* No, I am a poor homely man, as God made me.

*M. Mery.* By the faith that I owe to God, sir, but ye be!

Would I might for your sake spend a thousand pound land. 115

*R. Roister.* I dare say thou wouldest have me to thy husband.

*M. Mery.* Yea, and I were the fairest lady in the shire,

And knew you as I know you, and see you now here —  
Well, I say no more.

*R. Roister.* Gramercies, with all my heart!

*M. Mery.* But since that cannot be, will ye play a wise part? 120

*R. Roister.* How should I?

*M. Mery.* Refrain from Custance a while now,  
And I warrant her soon right glad to seek to you.  
Ye shall see her anon come on her knees creeping,  
And pray you to be good to her, salt tears weeping.

*R. Roister.* But what and she come not?

*M. Mery.* In faith, then, farewell she. 125  
Or else if ye be wroth, ye may avenged be.

*R. Roister.* By Cock's precious potstick, and e'en so I shall.

I will utterly destroy her, and house and all.

But I would be avenged in the mean space,

On that vile scribbler, that did my wooing disgrace. 130

*M. Mery.* "Scribbler," ko you, indeed he is worthy no less.

I will call him to you, and ye bid me doubtless.

*R. Roister.* Yes, for although he had as many lives,

As a thousand widows, and a thousand wives,

As a thousand lions, and a thousand rats, 135

A thousand wolves, and a thousand cats,

A thousand bulls, and a thousand calves,

And a thousand legions divided in halves,

He shall never 'scape death on my sword's point,

Though I should be torn therefore joint by joint. 140

*M. Mery.* Nay, if ye will kill him, I will not fet him,

I will not in so much extremity set him ;

He may yet amend, sir, and be an honest man,

Therefore pardon him, good soul, as much as ye can.

*R. Roister.* Well, for thy sake, this once with his life he shall pass, 145

But I will hew him all to pieces, by the Mass.

*M. Mery.* Nay, faith, ye shall promise that he shall no harm have,

Else I will not fet him.

*R. Roister.* I shall, so God me save —

But I may chide him a-good.

*M. Mery.* Yea, that do, hardily.

*R. Roister.* Go, then. .

*M. Mery.* I return, and bring him to you by and by. 150

[*Ex.*

## ACTUS III, SCÆNA V

ROISTER DOISTER.    MATHEW MERYGREEKE.    SCRIVENER.

*R. Roister.* What is a gentleman but his word  
and his promise?

I must now save this villain's life in any wise,  
And yet at him already my hands do tickle,  
I shall uneth hold them, they will be so fickle.  
But, lo, and Merygreeke have not brought him sence.

*M. Mery.* Nay, I would I had of my purse paid  
forty pence. 6

*Scrivener.* So would I too; but it needed not, that  
stound.

*M. Mery.* But the gentman had rather spent five  
thousand pound,  
For it disgraced him at least five times so much.

*Scrivener.* He disgraced himself, his loutishness is  
such. 10

*R. Roister.* How long they stand prating! Why  
comest thou not away?

*M. Mery.* Come now to himself, and hark what  
he will say.

*Scrivener.* I am not afraid in his presence to appear.

*R. Roister.* Art thou come, fellow?

*Scrivener.* How think you? Am I not here?

*R. Roister.* What hindrance hast thou done me,  
and what villainy? 15

*Scrivener.* It hath come of thyself, if thou hast  
had any.

*R. Roister.* All the stock thou comest of later or  
rather,

From thy first father's grandfather's father's father,  
Nor all that shall come of thee to the world's end,

Though to threescore generations they descend, 20  
Can be able to make me a just recompense,  
For this trespass of thine and this one offence.

*Scrivener.* Wherein?

*R. Roister.* Did not you make me a letter, brother?

*Scrivener.* Pay the like hire, I will make you such  
another.

*R. Roister.* Nay, see and these whoreson Pharisees  
and Scribes 25

Do not get their living by polling and bribes.

If it were not for shame —

*Scrivener.* Nay, hold thy hands still.

*M. Mery.* Why, did ye not promise that ye would  
not him spill?

*Scrivener.* Let him not spare me.

*R. Roister.* Why wilt thou strike me again?

*Scrivener.* Ye shall have as good as ye bring of  
me, that is plain. 30

*M. Mery.* I cannot blame him, sir, though your  
blows would him grieve.

For he knoweth present death to ensue of all ye give.

*R. Roister.* Well, this man for once hath pur-  
chased thy pardon.

*Scrivener.* And what say ye to me? or else I will  
be gone.

*R. Roister.* I say the letter thou madest me was  
not good. 35

*Scrivener.* Then did ye wrong copy it, of likelihood.

*R. Roister.* Yes, out of thy copy word for word I  
wrote.

*Scrivener.* Then was it as ye prayed to have it, I wot,  
But in reading and pointing there was made some fault.

*R. Roister.* I wot not, but it made all my matter  
to halt. 40

*Scrivener.* How say you, is this mine original or no?

*R. Roister.* The self same that I wrote out of, so mote I go!

*Scrivener.* Look you on your own fist, and I will look on this,

And let this man be judge whether I read amiss.

“To mine own dear coney-bird, sweetheart, and pigsney, 45

Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by.”

How now? doth not this superscription agree?

*R. Roister.* Read that is within, and there ye shall the fault see.

*Scrivener.* “Sweet mistress, whereas I love you nothing at all 49

Regarding your riches and substance — chief of all

For your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit

I commend me unto you. — Never a whit

Sorry to hear report of your good welfare,

For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,

That ye be worthy favour; of no living man 55

To be abhorred; of every honest man

To be taken for a woman inclined to vice

Nothing at all; to virtue giving her due price. —

Wherefore concerning marriage, ye are thought

Such a fine paragon, as ne’er honest man bought. — 60

And now by these presents I do you advertise,

That I am minded to marry you — in no wise

For your goods and substance — I can be content

To take you as you are. If ye will be my wife,

Ye shall be assured for the time of my life, 65

I will keep you right well; from good raiment and fare,

Ye shall not be kept; but in sorrow and care

Ye shall in no wise live; at your own liberty,

Do and say what ye lust ; ye shall never please me  
 But when ye are merry ; I will be all sad 70  
 When ye are sorry ; I will be very glad  
 When ye seek your heart's ease ; I will be unkind  
 At no time ; in me shall ye much gentleness find.  
 But all things contrary to your will and mind  
 Shall be done otherwise ; I will not be behind 75  
 To speak. And as for all them that would do you  
 wrong —

I will so help and maintain ye — shall not live long.  
 Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you, but I,  
 I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die.  
 Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord you save and  
 keep. — 80

From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep,  
 Who favoureth you no less, ye may be bold,  
 Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold."  
 Now, sir, what default can ye find in this letter ?

*R. Roister.* Of truth, in my mind there cannot be  
 a better. 85

*Scrivener.* Then was the fault in reading, and not  
 in writing,

No, nor I dare say in the form of enditing.  
 But who read this letter, that it sounded so naught ?

*M. Mery.* I read it, indeed.

*Scrivener.* Ye read it not as ye ought.

*R. Roister.* Why, thou wretched villain, was all  
 this same fault in thee ? 90

*M. Mery.* I knock your costard if ye offer to strike  
 me !

*R. Roister.* Strikest thou, indeed ? and I offer but  
 in jest ?

*M. Mery.* Yea, and rap you again except ye can sit  
 in rest —



And I will no longer tarry here, me believe!

*R. Roister.* What, wilt thou be angry, and I do thee  
forgive? 95

Fare thou well, scribbler, I cry thee mercy indeed.

*Scrivener.* Fare ye well, bibbler, and worthily may  
ye speed!

*R. Roister.* If it were another but thou, it were a  
knave.

*M. Mery.* Ye are another yourself, sir, the Lord us  
both save.

Albeit in this matter I must your pardon crave. 100

Alas, would ye wish in me the wit that ye have?

But as for my fault I can quickly amend,

I will show Custance it was I that did offend.

*R. Roister.* By so doing her anger may be reformed.

*M. Mery.* But if by no entreaty she will be turned,  
Then set light by her and be as testy as she, 106  
And do your force upon her with extremity.

*R. Roister.* Come on, therefore, let us go home in  
sadness.

*M. Mery.* That if force shall need all may be in a  
readiness —

And as for this letter, hardily, let all go. 110

We will know where she refuse you for that or no.

[*Exeant am.*]

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA I

SYM SURESBY.

*Sym Sure.* Is there any man but I, Sym Suresby,  
alone,

That would have taken such an enterprise him upon,  
In such an outrageous tempest as this was,  
Such a dangerous gulf of the sea to pass?

I think, verily, Neptune's mighty godship                 5  
Was angry with some that was in our ship,  
And but for the honesty which in me he found,  
I think for the others' sake we had been drowned.  
But fie on that servant which for his master's wealth  
Will stick for to hazard both his life and his health. 10  
My master, Gawyn Goodluck, after me a day,  
Because of the weather, thought best his ship to stay,  
And now that I have the rough surges so well past,  
God grant I may find all things safe here at last.  
Then will I think all my travail well spent.                 15  
Now the first point wherefore my master hath me sent.  
Is to salute dame Christian Custance, his wife  
Espoused, whom he tendereth no less than his life.  
I must see how it is with her, well or wrong,  
And whether for him she doth not now think long. 20  
Then to other friends I have a message or tway,  
And then so to return and meet him on the way.  
Now will I go knock that I may despatch with speed,  
But lo, forth cometh herself happily indeed.

ACTUS IV, SCÆNA II

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. SYM SURESBY.

*C. Custance.* I come to see if any more stirring  
be here,  
But what stranger is this which doth to me appear?  
*Sym Sure.* I will speak to her. Dame, the Lord  
you save and see.  
*C. Custance.* What, friend Sym Suresby? For-  
sooth, right welcome ye be!  
How doth mine own Gawyn Goodluck, I pray thee  
tell?

*Sym Sure.* When he knoweth of your health he will be perfect well.

*C. Custance.* If he have perfect health, I am as I would be.

*Sym Sure.* Such news will please him well, this is as it should be.

*C. Custance.* I think now long for him.

*Sym Sure.* And he as long for you.

*C. Custance.* When will he be at home?

*Sym Sure.* His heart is here e'en now, 10  
His body cometh after.

*C. Custance.* I would see that fain.

*Sym Sure.* As fast as wind and sail can carry it  
amain.

But what two men are yond coming hitherward?

*C. Custance.* Now I shrew their best Christmas  
cheeks both togetherward.

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA III

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. SYM SURESBY. RALPH ROISTER. MATHEW  
MERYGREEKE. TRUPENIE.

*C. Custance.* What mean these lewd fellows thus  
to trouble me still?

*Sym Suresby* here perchance shall thereof deem some  
ill,

And shall suspect in me some point of naughtiness—  
And they come hitherward!

*Sym Sure.* What is their business?

*C. Custance.* I have nought to them; nor they to  
me in sadness. 5

*Sym Sure.* Let us hearken them; somewhat there  
is, I fear it.

*R. Roister.* I will speak out aloud best, that she may hear it.

*M. Mery.* Nay, alas, ye may so fear her out of her wit.

*R. Roister.* By the cross of my sword, I will hurt her no whit.

*M. Mery.* Will ye do no harm indeed? shall I trust your word? 10

*R. Roister.* By Roister Doister's faith, I will speak but in bord.

*Sym Sure.* Let us hearken them; somewhat there is, I fear it.

*R. Roister.* I will speak out aloud, I care not who hear it:

Sirs, see that my harness, my target, and my shield,  
Be made as bright now, as when I was last in field, 15  
As white as I should to war again to-morrow:

For sick shall I be, but I work some folk sorrow.

Therefore see that all shine as bright as Saint George,  
Or as doth a key newly come from the smith's forge,  
I would have my sword and harness to shine so  
bright, 20

That I might therewith dim mine enemies' sight,  
I would have it cast beams as fast, I tell you plain,  
As doth the glittering grass after a shower of rain.  
And see that in case I should need to come to arming,  
All things may be ready at a minute's warning, 25  
For such chance may chance in an hour, do ye hear?

*M. Mery.* As perchance shall not chance again in seven year.

*R. Roister.* Now draw we near to her, and hear what shall be said.

*M. Mery.* But I would not have you make her too much afraid.

*R. Roister.* Well found, sweet wife, I trust, for  
all this your sour look. 30

*C. Custance.* "Wife" — why call ye me wife?

*Sym Sure.* "Wife?" This gear goeth a-crook.

*M. Mery.* Nay, mistress Custance, I warrant you,  
our letter

Is not as we read e'en now, but much better,  
And where ye half stomached this gentleman afore.  
For this same letter, ye will love him now therefore,  
Nor it is not this letter, though ye were a queen, 36  
That should break marriage between you twain, I ween,

*C. Custance.* I did not refuse him for the letter's  
sake.

*R. Roister.* Then ye are content me for your hus-  
band to take?

*C. Custance.* You for my husband to take? no-  
thing less, truly. 40

*R. Roister.* Yea, say so, sweet spouse, afore  
strangers hardily.

*M. Mery.* And though I have here his letter of  
love with me,

Yet his ring and tokens he sent, keep safe with ye.

*C. Custance.* A mischief take his tokens, and him  
and thee too!

But what prate I with fools? have I naught else to do?  
Come in with me, Sym Suresby, to take some  
repast. 46

*Sym Sure.* I must ere I drink, by your leave, go  
in all haste,

To a place or two, with earnest letters of his.

*C. Custance.* Then come drink here with me.

*Sym Sure.* I thank you!

*C. Custance.* Do not miss.

You shall have a token to your master with you. 50

*Sym Sure.* No tokens this time, gramercies, God be with you. [Exeat.

*C. Custance.* Surely this fellow misdeemeth some ill in me,

Which thing but God help, will go near to spill me.

*R. Roister.* Yea, farewell, fellow, and tell thy master Goodluck

That he cometh too late of this blossom to pluck 55  
Let him keep him there still, or at leastwise make no haste,

As for his labour hither he shall spend in waste.  
His betters be in place now.

*M. Mery.* As long as it will hold.

*C. Custance.* I will be even with thee, thou beast, thou mayst be bold!

*R. Roister.* Will ye have us then?

*C. Custance.* I will never have thee! 60

*R. Roister.* Then will I have you?

*C. Custance.* No, the devil shall have thee!

I have gotten this hour more shame and harm by thee,  
Than all thy life days thou canst do me honesty.

*M. Mery.* Why now may ye see what it cometh to, in the end,

To make a deadly foe of your most loving friend; 65  
And, i-wis, this letter, if ye would hear it now —

*C. Custance.* I will hear none of it.

*M. Mery.* In faith, would ravish you.

*C. Custance.* He hath stained my name for ever, this is clear.

*R. Roister.* I can make all as well in an hour.

*M. Mery.* As ten year.

How say ye, will ye have him?

*C. Custance.* No.

*M. Mery.* Will ye take him? 70

*C. Custance.* I defy him.

*M. Mery.* At my word?

*C. Custance.* A shame take him.

Waste no more wind, for it will never be.

*M. Mery.* This one fault with twain shall be mended,  
ye shall see.

Gentle mistress Custance, now, good mistress Custance!

Honey mistress Custance, now, sweet mistress Custance! 75

Golden mistress Custance, now, white mistress Custance!

Silken mistress Custance, now, fair mistress Custance!

*C. Custance.* Faith, rather than to marry with such  
a doltish lout,

I would match myself with a beggar, out of doubt.

*M. Mery.* Then I can say no more; to speed we  
are not like, 80

Except ye rap out a rag of your rhetoric.

*C. Custance.* Speak not of winning me, for it shall  
never be so!

*R. Roister.* Yes, dame, I will have you, whether  
ye will or no!

I command you to love me, wherefore should ye not?

Is not my love to you chafing and burning hot? 85

*M. Mery.* To her! That is well said.

*R. Roister.* Shall I so break my brain

To dote upon you, and ye not love us again?

*M. Mery.* Well said yet!

*C. Custance.* Go to, you goose!

*R. Roister.* I say, Kit Custance,

In case ye will not ha'ze, — well, better "yes,"  
perchance!

*C. Custance.* Avaunt, losel! pick thee hence.

*M. Mery.* Well, sir, ye perceive, 90  
For all your kind offer, she will not you receive.

*R. Roister.* Then a straw for her, and a straw for  
her again,  
She shall not be my wife, would she never so fain —  
No, and though she would be at ten thousand pound  
cost!

*M. Mery.* Lo, dame, ye may see what an husband  
ye have lost. 95

*C. Custance.* Yea, no force, a jewel much better  
lost than found.

*M. Mery.* Ah, ye will not believe how this doth  
my heart wound.  
How should a marriage between you be toward,  
If both parties draw back, and become so froward?

*R. Roister.* Nay, dame, I will fire thee out of thy  
house, 100  
And destroy thee and all thine, and that by and by!

*M. Mery.* Nay, for the passion of God, sir, do not so.

*R. Roister.* Yes, except she will say yea to that she  
said no.

*C. Custance.* And what — be there no officers, trow  
we, in town  
To check idle loiterers, bragging up and down? 105  
Where be they, by whom vagabonds should be re-  
pressed,

That poor silly widows might live in peace and rest?  
Shall I never rid thee out of my company?  
I will call for help. What ho, come forth, Trupenie!

[Enter Trupenie.

*Trupenie.* Anon. What is your will, mistress? did  
ye call me? 110

*C. Custance.* Yea. Go run apace, and as fast as may  
be,



Pray Tristram Trustie, my most assured friend,  
To be here by and by, that he may me defend.

*Trupenie.* That message so quickly shall be done,  
by God's grace,  
That at my return ye shall say, I went apace. 115

[*Exeat.*

*C. Custance.* Then shall we see, I trow, whether  
ye shall do me harm.

*R. Roister.* Yes, in faith, Kit, I shall thee and thine  
so charm,  
That all women incarnate by thee may beware.

*C. Custance.* Nay, as for charming me, come hither  
if thou dare,  
I shall clout thee till thou stink, both thee and thy  
train, 120

And coil thee mine own hands, and send thee home  
again.

*R. Roister.* Yea, sayest thou me that, dame? Dost  
thou me threaten?  
Go we, I still see whether I shall be beaten!

*M. Mery.* Nay, for the pashe of God, let me now  
treat peace,  
For bloodshed will there be in case this strife in-  
crease. 125

Ah, good dame Custance, take better way with you.

*C. Custance.* Let him do his worst.

*M. Mery.*

Yield in time.

*R. Roister.*

Come hence, thou.

[*Exeant Roister et Mery.*

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA IV

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. ANNOT ALYFACE. TIBET T.  
M. MUMBLECRUST.

*C. Custance.* So, sirrah, if I should not with him  
take this way,  
I should not be rid of him, I think, till doom's  
day.  
I will call forth my folks, that, without any mocks,  
If he come again we may give him raps and knocks.  
Madge Mumblecrust, come forth, and Tibet Talk-  
apace. 5

Yea, and come forth too, mistress Annot Alyface.

*An. Alyface.* I come.

*Tibet.* And I am here.

*M. Mumble.* And I am here too, at length.

*C. Custance.* Like warriors, if need be, ye must  
show your strength.

The man that this day hath thus beguiled you,  
Is Ralph Roister Doister, whom ye know well inowe, 10  
The most lout and dastard that ever on ground  
trod.

*Tib. Talk.* I see all folk mock him when he goeth  
abroad.

*C. Custance.* What, pretty maid, will ye talk when  
I speak?

*Tib. Talk.* No, forsooth, good mistress!

*C. Custance.* Will ye my tale break?  
He threateneth to come hither with all his force to  
fight, 15

I charge you, if he come, on him with all your might.

*M. Mumble.* I with my distaff will reach him  
one rap.

*Tib. Talk.* And I with my new broom will sweep  
him one swap,

And then with our great club I will reach him one rap.

*An. Alyface.* And I with our skimmer will fling  
him one flap. 20

*Tib. Talk.* Then Trupenie's firefork will him  
shrewdly fray,

And you with the spit may drive him quite away.

*C. Custance.* Go, make all ready, that it may be  
even so.

*Tib. Talk.* For my part I shrew them that last  
about it go. [Exeant.

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA V

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. TRUPENIE. TRISTRAM TRUSTIE.

*C. Custance.* Trupenie did promise me to run a  
great pace,

My friend Tristram Trustie to fet into this place.

Indeed he dwelleth hence a good start, I confess:

But yet a quick messenger might twice since, as I  
guess,

Have gone and come again. Ah, yond I spy him now!

*Trupenie.* Ye are a slow goer, sir, I make God  
avow. 6

My mistress Custance will in me put all the blame,

Your legs be longer than mine—come apace for  
shame!

*C. Custance.* I can thee thank, Trupenie, thou  
hast done right well.

*Trupenie.* Mistress, since I went no grass hath  
grown on my heel, 10

But master Tristram Trustie here maketh no speed.

*C. Custance.* That he came at all, I thank him in very deed,

For now have I need of the help of some wise man.

*T. Trustie.* Then may I be gone again, for none such I am.

*Trupenie.* Ye may be by your going — for no Alderman 15

Can go, I dare say, a sadder pace than ye can.

*C. Custance.* Trupenie, get thee in. Thou shalt among them know,

How to use thyself like a proper man, I trow.

*Trupenie.* I go. [Ex.

*C. Custance.* Now, Tristram Trustie, I thank you right much.

For, at my first sending, to come ye never grutch. 20

*T. Trustie.* Dame Custance, God ye save, and while my life shall last,

For my friend Goodluck's sake ye shall not send in wast.

*C. Custance.* He shall give you thanks.

*T. Trustie.* I will do much for his sake.

*C. Custance.* But alack, I fear, great displeasure shall be take.

*T. Trustie.* Wherefore?

*C. Custance.* For a foolish matter.

*T. Trustie.* What is your cause? 25

*C. Custance.* I am ill accombred with a couple of daws.

*T. Trustie.* Nay, weep not, woman, but tell me what your cause is.

As concerning my friend is anything amiss?

*C. Custance.* No, not on my part; but here was Sym Suresby —

*T. Trustie.* He was with me and told me so.

*C. Custance.* And he stood by 30  
While Ralph Roister Doister with help of Mery-  
greeke,

For promise of marriage did unto me seek.

*T. Trustie.* And had ye made any promise before  
them twain?

*C. Custance.* No, I had rather be torn in pieces  
and slain,  
No man hath my faith and troth, but Gawyn Good-  
luck, 35

And that before Suresby did I say, and there stuck,  
But of certain letters there were such words spoken —

*T. Trustie.* He told me that too.

*C. Custance.* And of a ring and token, —  
That Suresby I spied did more than half suspect,  
That I my faith to Gawyn Goodluck did reject. 40

*T. Trustie.* But there was no such matter, dame  
Custance, indeed?

*C. Custance.* If ever my head thought it, God  
send me ill speed!  
Wherefore, I beseech you, with me to be a witness,  
That in all my life I never intended thing less,  
And what a brainsick fool Ralph Roister Doister is, 45  
Yourself know well enough.

*T. Trustie.* Ye say full true, i-wis.

*C. Custance.* Because to be his wife I ne grant  
nor apply,  
Hither will he come, he sweareth, by and by,  
To kill both me and mine, and beat down my house flat.  
Therefore I pray your aid.

*T. Trustie.* I warrant you that. 50

*C. Custance.* Have I so many years lived a sober  
life,  
And showed myself honest, maid, widow, and wife,

And now to be abused in such a vile sort?

Ye see how poor widows live all void of comfort.

*T. Trustie.* I warrant him do you no harm nor  
wrong at all. 55

*C. Custance.* No, but Mathew Merygreeke doth  
me most appall,  
That he would join himself with such a wretched  
lout.

*T. Trustie.* He doth it for a jest, I know him out  
of doubt,

And here cometh Merygreeke.

*C. Custance.* Then shall we hear his mind.

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA VI

MERYGREEKE. CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE. TRIST. TRUSTIE.

*M. Mery.* Custance and Trustie both, I do you  
here well find.

*C. Custance.* Ah, Mathew Merygreeke, ye have  
used me well.

*M. Mery.* Now for altogether ye must your answer  
tell.

Will ye have this man, woman, or else will ye  
not?

Else will he come, never boar so brim nor toast so  
hot. 5

*Tris. and Cus.* But why join ye with him?

*T. Trustie.* For mirth?

*C. Custance.* Or else in sadness?

*M. Mery.* The more fond of you both! Hardily the  
matter guess.

*T. Trustie.* Lo, how say ye, dame?

*M. Mery.* Why do ye think, dame Custance,

That in this wooing I have meant ought but past-  
ance?

*C. Custance.* Much things ye spake, I wot, to  
maintain his dotage. 10

*M. Mery.* But well might ye judge I spake it all  
in mockage.

For why? Is Roister Doister a fit husband for you?

*T. Trustie.* I daresay ye never thought it.

*M. Mery.* No, to God I vow.  
And did not I know afore of the insurance  
Between Gawyn Goodluck and Christian Custance?  
And did not I for the nonce, by my conveyance, 16  
Read his letter in a wrong sense for dalliance?

That if you could have take it up at the first bound,  
We should thereat such a sport and pastime have  
found,

That all the whole town should have been the merrier.

*C. Custance.* Ill ache your heads both! I was  
never wearier, 21

Nor never more vexed since the first day I was born!

*T. Trustie.* But very well I wist he here did all  
in scorn.

*C. Custance.* But I feared thereof to take dis-  
honesty.

*M. Mery.* This should both have made sport and  
showed your honesty, 25  
And Goodluck, I dare swear, your wit therein would  
'low.

*T. Trustie.* Yea, being no worse than we know it  
to be now.

*M. Mery.* And nothing yet too late; for when I  
come to him,  
Hither will he repair with a sheep's look full grim,  
By plain force and violence to drive you to yield. 30

*C. Custance.* If ye two bid me, we will with him  
pitch a field,  
I and my maids together.

*M. Mery.* Let us see ! be bold.

*C. Custance.* Ye shall see women's war !

*T. Trustie.* That fight will I behold !

*M. Mery.* If occasion serve, taking his part full  
brim,

I will strike at you, but the rap shall light on him, 35  
When we first appear.

*C. Custance.* Then will I run away  
As though I were afeard.

*T. Trustie.* Do you that part well play  
And I will sue for peace.

*M. Mery.* And I will set him on.  
Then will he look as fierce as a Cotsold lion.

*T. Trustie.* But when goest thou for him ?

*M. Mery.* That do I very now. 40

*C. Custance.* Ye shall find us here.

*M. Mery.* Well, God have mercy on you !

*T. Trustie.* There is no cause of fear ; the least  
boy in the street—

*C. Custance.* Nay, the least girl I have, will make  
him take his feet.  
But hark ! methink they make preparation.

*T. Trustie.* No force, it will be a good recreation !

*C. Custance.* I will stand within, and step forth  
speedily, 46  
And so make as though I ran away dreadfully.



## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA VII

R. ROISTER. M. MERYGREEKE. C. CUSTANCE. D. DOUGHTIE.  
HARPAX. TRISTRAM TRUSTIE.

*R. Roister.* Now, sirs, keep your ray, and see your hearts be stout.

But where be these caitiffs? methink they dare not rout!  
How sayest thou, Merygreeke? — what doth Kit Custance say?

*M. Mery.* I am loth to tell you.

*R. Roister.* Tush, speak, man — yea or nay?

*M. Mery.* Forsooth, sir, I have spoken for you all that I can, 5

But if ye win her, ye must e'en play the man,  
E'en to fight it out, ye must a man's heart take.

*R. Roister.* Yes, they shall know, and thou knowest, I have a stomach.

[*M. Mery.*] “A stomach,” quod you, yea, as good as e'er man had!

*R. Roister.* I trow they shall find and feel that I am a lad. 10

*M. Mery.* By this cross, I have seen you eat your meat as well

As any that e'er I have seen of or heard tell.

“A stomach,” quod you? He that will that deny,  
I know, was never at dinner in your company.

*R. Roister.* Nay, the stomach of a man it is that I mean. 15

*M. Mery.* Nay, the stomach of a horse or a dog, I ween.

*R. Roister.* Nay, a man's stomach with a weapon, mean I.

*M. Mery.* Ten men can scarce match you with a spoon in a pie.

*R. Roister.* Nay, the stomach of a man to try in strife.

*M. Mery.* I never saw your stomach cloyed yet in my life. 20

*R. Roister.* Tush, I mean in strife or fighting to try.

*M. Mery.* We shall see how ye will strike now, being angry.

*R. Roister.* Have at thy pate then, and save thy head if thou may.

*M. Mery.* Nay, then have at your pate again by this day.

*R. Roister.* Nay, thou mayst not strike at me again in no wise. 25

*M. Mery.* I cannot in fight make to you such warrantise :

But as for your foes, here let them the bargain bie.

*R. Roister.* Nay, as for they, shall every mother's child die.

And in this my fume a little thing might make me  
To beat down house and all, and else the devil take  
me! 30

*M. Mery.* If I were as ye be, by Gog's dear mother,

I would not leave one stone upon another,  
Though she would redeem it with twenty thousand  
pounds.

*R. Roister.* It shall be even so, by His lily wounds.

*M. Mery.* Be not at one with her upon any  
amends. 35

*R. Roister.* No, though she make to me never so  
many friends,

Nor if all the world for her would undertake,  
No, not God himself neither, shall not her peace  
make,

On, therefore, march forward! — Soft, stay a while yet.

*M. Mery.* On.

*R. Roister.* Tarry.

*M. Mery.* Forth.

*R. Roister.* Back.

*M. Mery* On.

*R. Roister.* Soft! Now forward set! 40

*C. Custance.* What business have we here? Out!  
alas, alas!

*R. Roister.* Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Didst thou see that, Merygreeke, how afraid she was?

Didst thou see how she fled apace out of my sight?

Ah, good sweet Custance, I pity her by this light. 45

*M. Mery.* That tender heart of yours will mar altogether, —

Thus will ye be turned with wagging of a feather.

*R. Roister.* On, sirs, keep your ray.

*M. Mery.* On, forth, while this gear is hot.

*R. Roister.* Soft, the arms of Caleys, I have one thing forgot! 49

*M. Mery.* What lack we now?

*R. Roister.* Retire, or else we be all slain!

*M. Mery.* Back, for the pash of God! back, sirs,  
back again!

What is the great matter?

*R. Roister.* This hasty forthgoing

Had almost brought us all to utter undoing,

It made me forget a thing most necessary.

*M. Mery.* Well remembered of a captain, by Saint Mary. 55

*R. Roister.* It is a thing must be had.

*M. Mery.* Let us have it then.

---

*R. Roister.* But I wot not where nor how.

*M. Mery.* Then wot not I when.

But what is it?

*R. Roister.* Of a chief thing I am to seek.

*M. Mery.* Tut, so will ye be, when ye have studied  
a week.

But tell me what it is?

*R. Roister.* I lack yet an headpiece. 60

*M. Mery.* The kitchen collocavit, the best hens to  
grease,

Run, fet it, Dobinet, and come at once withal,  
And bring with thee my pot-gun, hanging by the  
wall. [Exit DOBINET.

I have seen your head with it, full many a time,  
Covered as safe as it had been with a skrine; 65  
And I warrant it save your head from any stroke,  
Except perchance to be amazed with the smoke.  
I warrant your head therewith, except for the mist,  
As safe as if it were fast locked up in a chest.  
And lo, here our Dobinet cometh with it now. 70

[Re-enter DOBINET.

*D. Doughtie.* It will cover me to the shoulders well  
enow.

*M. Mery.* Let me see it on.

*R. Roister.* In faith, it doth metely well.

*M. Mery.* There can be no fitter thing. Now ye  
must us tell

What to do.

*R. Roister.* Now forth in ray, sirs, and stop no  
more!

*M. Mery.* Now, Saint George to borrow, drum dub-  
a-dub afore! 75

*T. Trustie.* What mean you to do, sir, commit  
manslaughter?

*R. Roister.* To kill forty such is a matter of laughter.

*T. Trustie.* And who is it, sir, whom ye intend thus to spill?

*R. Roister.* Foolish Custance here forceth me against my will.

*T. Trustie.* And is there no mean your extreme wrath to slake? 80

She shall some amends unto your good maship make.

*R. Roister.* I will none amends.

*T. Trustie.* Is her offence so sore?

*M. Mery.* And he were a lout she could have done no more.

She hath called him fool, and dressed him like a fool,

Mocked him like a fool, used him like a fool. 85

*T. Trustie.* Well, yet the sheriff, the justice, or constable,

Her misdemeanour to punish might be able.

*R. Roister.* No, sir, I mine own self will, in this present cause,

Be sheriff, and justice, and whole judge of the laws;

This matter to amend, all officers be I shall,

Constable, bailiff, sergeant.

*M. Mery.* And hangman and all. 90

*T. Trustie.* Yet a noble courage, and the heart of a man,

Should more honour win by bearing with a woman.

Therefore take the law, and let her answer thereto.

*R. Roister.* Merygreeke, the best way were even so to do.

What honour should it be with a woman to fight? 95

*M. Mery.* And what then, will ye thus forgo and lese your right?

*R. Roister.* Nay, I will take the law on her withouten grace.

*T. Trustie.* Or, if your maship could pardon this one trespass,

I pray you forgive her!

*R. Roister.* Ho!

*M. Mery.* Tush, tush, sir, do not!

Be good, master, to her.

*R. Roister.* Hoh!

*M. Mery.* Tush, I say, do not. 100

And what! shall your people here return straight home?

*T. Trustie.* Yea, levy the camp, sirs, and hence again each one.

*R. Roister.* But be still in readiness, if I hap to call.

I cannot tell what sudden chance may befall.

*M. Mery.* Do not off your harness, sirs, I you advise, 105

At the least for this fortnight in no manner wise.

Perchance in an hour, when all ye think least,

Our master's appetite to fight will be best.

But soft, ere ye go, have one at Custance' house.

*R. Roister.* Soft, what wilt thou do?

*M. Mery.* Once discharge my harquebouse,

And, for my heart's ease, have once more with my potgun. 111

*R. Roister.* Hold thy hands, else is all our purpose clean fordone.

*M. Mery.* And it cost me my life.

*R. Roister.* I say, thou shalt not.

*M. Mery.* By the Matte, but I will. Have once more with hail shot.

I will have some pennyworth, I will not lese all. 115

## ACTUS IV, SCÆNA VIII

M. MERYGREEKE. C. CUSTANCE. R. ROISTER. TIB. TALK. AN.  
ALYFACE. M. MUMBLECRUST. TRUPENIE. DOBINET DOUGH-  
TIE. HARPAZ. *Two drums with their enstgns.*

*C. Custance.* What caitiffs are those that so shake  
my house wall?

*M. Mery.* Ah, sirrah! now, Custance, if ye had so  
much wit,

I would see you ask pardon, and yourselves submit.

*C. Custance.* Have I still this ado with a couple of  
fools?

*M. Mery.* Hear ye what she saith?

*C. Custance.* Maidens come forth with your tools! 5

*R. Roister.* In array!

*M. Mery.* Dubbadub, sirrah!

*R. Roister.* In array!

They come suddenly on us.

*M. Mery.* Dubbadub!

*R. Roister.* In array!

That ever I was born, we are taken tardy.

*M. Mery.* Now, sirs, quit ourselves like tall men  
and hardy!

*C. Custance.* On afore, Trupenie! Hold thine own,  
Annot! 10

On toward them, Tibet! for 'scape us they cannot!

Come forth, Madge Mumblecrust, to stand fast to-  
gether!

*M. Mery.* God send us a fair day!

*R. Roister.* See, they march on hither!

*Tib. Talk.* But, mistress —

*C. Custance.* What sayest thou?

*Tib. Talk.* Shall I go fet our goose?

*C. Custance.* What to do?

*Tib. Talk.* To yonder captain I will turn her loose,  
And she gape and hiss at him, as she doth at me, 16  
I durst jeopard my hand she will make him flee.

*C. Custance.* On forward!

*R. Roister.* They come!

*M. Mery.* Stand!

*R. Roister.* Hold!

*M. Mery.* Keep!

*R. Roister.* There!

*M. Mery.* Strike!

*R. Roister.* Take heed!

*C. Custance.* Well said, Trupenie!

*Trupenie.* Ah, whoresons!

*C. Custance.* Well done, indeed.

*M. Mery.* Hold thine own, Harpax! down with  
them, Dobinet! 20

*C. Custance.* Now Madge, there Annot! now stick  
them, Tibet!

*Tib. Talk.* All my chief quarrel is to this same  
little knave,

That beguiled me last day — nothing shall him save.

*D. Doughtie.* Down with this little quean, that hath  
at me such spite!

Save you from her, master — it is a very sprite! 25

*C. Custance.* I myself will Mounsire Grand Cap-  
tain undertake.

*R. Roister.* They win ground!

*M. Mery.* Save yourself, sir, for God's sake!

*R. Roister.* Out, alas! I am slain! Help!

*M. Mery.* Save yourself!

*R. Roister.* Alas!

*M. Mery.* Nay, then, have at you, mistress!

*R. Roister.* Thou hittest me, alas!



*M. Mery.* I will strike at Custance here.

*R. Roister.* Thou hittest me!

*M. Mery.* So I will! 30

Nay, mistress Custance!

*R. Roister.* Alas! thou hittest me still.

Hold.

*M. Mery.* Save yourself, sir.

*R. Roister.* Help! Out, alas! I am slain!

*M. Mery.* Truce, hold your hands, truce for a pissing while or twain!

Nay, how say you, Custance, for saving of your life,  
Will ye yield and grant to be this gentman's wife? 35

*C. Custance.* Ye told me he loved me — call ye this love?

*M. Mery.* He loved a while even like a turtle-dove.

*C. Custance.* Gay love, God save it! — so soon hot,  
so soon cold.

*M. Mery.* I am sorry for you — he could love you yet, so he could.

*R. Roister.* Nay, by Cock's precious, she shall be none of mine! 40

*M. Mery.* Why so?

*R. Roister.* Come away! by the Matte, she is man-kine.

I durst adventure the loss of my right hand,

If she did not slee her other husband, —

And see if she prepare not again to fight!

*M. Mery.* What then? Saint George to borrow, our ladies' knight! 45

*R. Roister.* Slee else whom she will, by Gog, she shall not slee me!

*M. Mery.* How then?

*R. Roister.* Rather than to be slain, I will flee.

*C. Custance.* To it again, my knightesses! Down with them all!

*R. Roister.* Away, away, away! she will else kill us all.

*M. Mery.* Nay, stick to it, like an hardy man and a tall. 50

*R. Roister.* Oh bones, thou hittest me! Away, or else die we shall.

*M. Mery.* Away, for the pashe of our sweet Lord Jesus Christ.

*C. Custance.* Away, lout and lubber, or I shall be thy priest. [Exeant om.

So this field is ours, we have driven them all away.

*Tib. Talk.* Thanks to God, mistress, ye have had a fair day. 55

*C. Custance.* Well, now go ye in, and make yourself some good cheer.

*Omnes pariter.*<sup>1</sup> We go.

*T. Trustie.* Ah, sir, what a field we have had here!

*C. Custance.* Friend Tristram, I pray you be a witness with me.

*T. Trustie.* Dame Custance, I shall depose for your honesty,

And now fare ye well, except something else ye would. 60

*C. Custance.* Not now, but when I need to send I will be bold. [Exeat.

I thank you for these pains. And now I will get me in.

Now Roister Doister will no more wooing begin. [Ex

<sup>1</sup> All with one accord.

ACTUS V, SCÆNA I

GAWYN GOODLUCK. SYM SURESBY.

*G. Good.* Sym Suresby, my trusty man, now advise thee well.

And see that no false surmises thou me tell.

Was there such ado about Custance of a truth?

*Sym Sure.* To report that I heard and saw, to me  
is ruth,

But both my duty and name and property      5  
Warneth me to you to show fidelity.

It may be well enough, and I wish it so to be ;

She may herself discharge, and try her honesty —

Yet their claim to her methought was very large,

For with letters, rings and tokens, they did her  
charge, 10

Which when I heard and saw I would none to you  
bring.

*G. Good.* No, by Saint Marie, I allow thee in that thing.

Ah, sirrah, now I see truth in the proverb old,

**All things that shineth is not by and by pure gold!**

If any do live a woman of honesty, 15

I would have sworn Christian Custance had been she.

*Sym Sure.* Sir, though I to you be a servant true  
and just,

Yet do not ye therefore your faithful spouse mistrust.

But examine the matter, and if ye shall it find

To be all well, be not ye for my words unkind. 20

G. Good. I shall do that is right, and as I see  
cause why —

But here cometh Custance forth, we shall know by  
and by.

## ACTUS V, SCÆNA II

C. CUSTANCE. GAWYN GOODLUCK. SYM SURESBY.

*C. Custance.* I come forth to see and hearken for  
news good,

For about this hour is the time of likelihood,  
That Gawyn Goodluck by the sayings of Suresby  
Would be at home; and lo, yond I see him, I!  
What! Gawyn Goodluck, the only hope of my life! 5  
Welcome home, and kiss me, your true espoused wife.

*G. Good.* Nay, soft, dame Custance; I must first,  
by your licence,  
See whether all things be clear in your conscience.  
I hear of your doings to me very strange.

*C. Custance.* What! fear ye that my faith towards  
you should change? 10

*G. Good.* I must needs mistrust ye be elsewhere  
entangled,  
For I hear that certain men with you have wrangled  
About the promise of marriage by you to them made.

*C. Custance.* Could any man's report your mind  
therein persuade?

*G. Good.* Well, ye must therein declare yourself  
to stand clear, 15  
Else I and you, dame Custance, may not join this  
year.

*C. Custance.* Then would I were dead, and fair  
laid in my grave!

Al, Suresby, is this the honesty that ye have,  
To hurt me with your report, not knowing the thing?

*Sym Sure.* If ye be honest, my words can hurt  
you nothing, 20  
But what I heard and saw, I might not but report.

*C. Custance.* Ah, Lord, help poor widows, destitute of comfort!

Truly, most dear spouse, nought was done but for pastance.

*G. Good.* But such kind of sporting is homely dalliance.

*C. Custance.* If ye knew the truth, ye would take all in good part. 25

*G. Good.* By your leave, I am not half well skilled in that art.

*C. Custance.* It was none but Roister Doister, that foolish mome.

*G. Good.* Yea, Custance, better, they say, a bad 'scuse than none.

*C. Custance.* Why, Tristram Trustie, sir, your true and faithful friend,

Was privy both to the beginning and the end. 30

Let him be the judge, and for me testify.

*G. Good.* I will the more credit that he shall verify,  
And because I will the truth know e'en as it is,  
I will to him myself, and know all without miss.

Come on, Sym Suresby, that before my friend thou  
may 35

Avouch the same words, which thou didst to me say.

[*Exeant.*]

## ACTUS V, SCÆNA III

CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE.

*C. Custance.* O Lord! how necessary it is now of days

That each body live uprightly all manner ways,  
For let never so little a gap be open,  
And be sure of this, the worst shall be spoken.

How innocent stand I in this for deed or thought, 5  
And yet see what mistrust towards me it hath wrought!  
But thou, Lord, knowest all folks' thoughts and eke  
intent,

And thou art the deliverer of all innocents.

Thou didst help the advoutress, that she might be  
amended, 9

Much more then help, Lord, that never ill intended.  
Thou didst help Susanna, wrongfully accused,  
And no less dost thou see, Lord, how I am now  
abused.

Thou didst help Hester, when she should have died,  
Help also, good Lord, that my truth may be tried.  
Yet if Gawyn Goodluck with Tristram Trustie  
speak, 15

I trust of ill report the force shall be but weak.  
And lo, yond they come, sadly talking together,  
I will abide, and not shrink for their coming hither.

## ACTUS V, SCÆNA IV

GAWYN GOODLUCK. TRISTRAM TRUSTIE. C. CUSTANCE. SYM  
SURESBY.

*G. Good.* And was it none other than ye to me  
report?

*Tristram.* No, and here were ye wished to have  
seen the sport.

*G. Good.* Would I had, rather than half of that  
in my purse!

*Sym Sure.* And I do much rejoice the matter was  
no worse,

And like as to open it I was to you faithful, 5  
So of dame Custance' honest truth I am joyful,

For God forbend that I should hurt her by false report.

*G. Good.* Well, I will no longer hold her in discomfort.

*C. Custance.* Now come they hitherward, I trust all shall be well.

*G. Good.* Sweet Custance, neither heart can think nor tongue tell, 10

How much I joy in your constant fidelity!

Come now, kiss me, the pearl of perfect honesty.

*C. Custance.* God let me no longer to continue in life,

Than I shall towards you continue a true wife.

*G. Good.* Well, now to make you for this some part of amends, 15

I shall desire first you, and then such of our friends  
As shall to you seem best, to sup at home with me,

Where at your fought field we shall laugh and merry be.

*Sym Sure.* And mistress, I beseech you, take with me no grief;

I did a true man's part, not wishing you reprief. 20

*C. Custance.* Though hasty reports, through surmises growing,

May of poor innocents be utter overthrowing,

Yet because to thy master thou hast a true heart,

And I know mine own truth, I forgive thee for my part.

*G. Good.* Go we all to my house, and of this gear no more. 25

Go, prepare all things, Sym Suresby; hence, run afore.

*Sym Sure.* I go.

[*Ex.*

*G. Good.* But who cometh yond, — *M. Merygreeke?*

*C. Custance.* Roister Doister's champion, I shrew his best cheek!

*T. Trustie.* Roister Doister self, your wooer, is with him too.

Surely some thing there is with us they have to do. 30

## ACTUS V, SCÆNA V

*M. MERYGREEKE. RALPH ROISTER. GAWYN GOODLUCK.  
TRISTRAM TRUSTIE. C. CUSTANCE.*

*M. Mery.* Yond I see Gawyn Goodluck, to whom lieth my message ;

I will first salute him after his long voyage,  
And then make all thing well concerning your behalf.

*R. Roister.* Yea, for the pash of God.

*M. Mery.* Hence out of sight, ye calf,  
Till I have spoke with them, and then I will you fet. 5

*R. Roister.* In God's name ! [Exit *R. ROISTER.*

*M. Mery.* What, master Gawyn Goodluck, well met !

And from your long voyage I bid you right welcome home.

*G. Good.* I thank you.

*M. Mery.* I come to you from an honest mome.

*G. Good.* Who is that ?

*M. Mery.* Roister Doister, that doughty kite.

*C. Custance.* Fie ! I can scarce abide ye should his name recite. 10

*M. Mery.* Ye must take him to favour, and pardon all past ;

He heareth of your return, and is full ill aghast.



- G. Good.* I am right well content he have with us  
some cheer.
- C. Custance.* Fie upon him, beast! then will not  
I be there.
- G. Good.* Why, Custance, do ye hate him more  
than ye love me? 15
- C. Custance.* But for your mind, sir, where he  
were would I not be.
- T. Trustie.* He would make us all laugh.
- M. Mery.* Ye ne'er had better sport.
- G. Good.* I pray you, sweet Custance, let him to  
us resort.
- C. Custance.* To your will I assent.
- M. Mery.* Why, such a fool it is,  
As no man for good pastime would forgo or miss. 20
- G. Good.* Fet him to go with us.
- M. Mery.* He will be a glad man. [*Ex.*]
- T. Trustie.* We must to make us mirth, maintain  
him all we can.
- And lo, yond he cometh, and Merygreeke with him.
- C. Custance.* At his first entrance ye shall see I  
will him trim.
- But first let us hearken the gentleman's wise talk. 25
- T. Trustie.* I pray you, mark, if ever ye saw crane  
so stalk.

## ACTUS V, SCÆNA VI

R. ROISTER. M. MERYGREEKE. C. CUSTANCE. G. GOODLUCK.  
T. TRUSTIE. D. DOUGHTIE. HARPAX.

- R. Roister.* May I then be bold?
- M. Mery.* I warrant you, on my word,  
They say they shall be sick, but ye be at their board.
- R. Roister.* They were not angry, then?

*M. Mery.* Yes, at first, and made strange,  
 But when I said your anger to favour should change,  
 And therewith had commended you accordingly, 5  
 They were all in love with your maship by and by,  
 And cried you mercy that they had done you wrong.

*R. Roister.* For why no man, woman, nor child  
 can hate me long.

*M. Mery.* "We fear," quod they, "he will be  
 avenged one day,  
 Then for a penny give all our lives we may." 10

*R. Roister.* Said they so indeed?

*M. Mery.* Did they? yea, even with one voice —  
 "He will forgive all," quod I. Oh, how they did re-  
 joice!

*R. Roister.* Ha, ha, ha!

*M. Mery.* "Go fet him," say they, "while he is in  
 good mood,  
 For have his anger who lust, we will not, by the  
 Rood."

*R. Roister.* I pray God that it be all true, that  
 thou hast me told, 15  
 And that she fight no more.

*M. Mery.* I warrant you, be bold.  
 To them, and salute them!

*R. Roister.* Sirs, I greet you all well!  
*Omnes.* Your mastership is welcome.

*C. Custance.* Saving my quarrel —  
 For sure I will put you up into the Exchequer.

*M. Mery.* Why so? better nay — wherefore?

*C. Custance.* For an usurer. 20

*R. Roister.* I am no usurer, good mistress, by His  
 arms!

*M. Mery.* When took he gain of money to any  
 man's harms?

*C. Custance.* Yes, a foul usurer he is, ye shall see else.

*R. Roister.* Didst not thou promise she would pick no mo quarrels?

*C. Custance.* He will lend no blows, but he have in recompense 25

Fifteen for one, which is too much of conscience.

*R. Roister.* Ah, dame, by the ancient law of arms, a man

Hath no honour to foil his hands on a woman.

*C. Custance.* And where other usurers take their gains yearly,

This man is angry but he have his by and by. 30

*G. Good.* Sir, do not for her sake bear me your displeasure.

*M. Mery.* Well, he shall with you talk thereof more at leisure.

Upon your good usage, he will now shake your hand.

*R. Roister.* And much heartily welcome from a strange land.

*M. Mery.* Be not afeard, Gawyn, to let him shake your fist. 35

*G. Good.* Oh, the most honest gentleman that e'er I wist.

I beseech your maship to take pain to sup with us.

*M. Mery.* He shall not say you nay, and I too, by Jesus,

Because ye shall be friends, and let all quarrels pass.

*R. Roister.* I will be as good friends with them as ere I was. 40

*M. Mery.* Then let me fet your quire that we may have a song.

*R. Roister.* Go.

[Exit M. MERY.]

*G. Good.* I have heard no melody all this year long.

*Re-enter M. MERY.*

*M. Mery.* Come on, sirs, quickly.

*R. Roister.* Sing on, sirs, for my friends' sake.

*D. Dough.* Call ye these your friends?

*R. Roister.* Sing on, and no mo words make.

[*Here they sing.*]

*G. Good.* The Lord preserve our most noble Queen  
of renown, 45  
And her virtues reward with the heavenly crown.

*C. Custance.* The Lord strengthen her most excellent Majesty,  
Long to reign over us in all prosperity.

*T. Trustie.* That her godly proceedings the faith  
to defend,  
He may 'stablish and maintain through to the end. 50

*M. Mery.* God grant her, as she doth, the Gospel  
to protect,  
Learning and virtue to advance, and vice to correct.

*R. Roister.* God grant her loving subjects both  
the mind and grace,  
Her most godly proceedings worthily to embrace.

*Harpax.* Her highness' most worthy counsellors,  
God prosper 55  
With honour and love of all men to minister.

*Omnes.* God grant the nobility her to serve and  
love,  
With all the whole commonty as doth them behove.

AMEN

CERTAIN SONGS TO BE SUNG BY THOSE WHICH  
SHALL USE THIS COMEDY OR INTERLUDE.

*The Second Song.*

Whoso to marry a minion wife,  
Hath had good chance and hap,  
Must love her and cherish her all his life,  
And dandle her in his lap.

If she will fare well, if she will go gay,  
A good husband ever still,  
Whatever she lust to do, or to say,  
Must let her have her own will.

5

About what affairs soever he go,  
 He must show her all his mind. 10  
 None of his counsel she may be kept fro,  
 Else is he a man unkind.

*The Fourth Song.*

I mun be married a Sunday,  
I mun be married a Sunday,  
Whosoever shall come that way,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

Roister Doister is my name,  
Roister Doister is my name,  
A lusty brute I am the same,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

Christian Custance have I found,  
 Christian Custance have I found,            10  
 A widow worth a thousand pound,  
 I mun be married a Sunday.

Custance is as sweet as honey,  
 Custance is as sweet as honey,  
 I her lamb and she my coney, 15  
 I mun be married a Sunday.

When we shall make our wedding feast,  
 When we shall make our wedding feast,  
 There shall be cheer for man and beast,  
 I mun be married a Sunday. 20  
 I mun be married a Sunday, etc.

*The Psalmody.*

*Placebo dilexi,*

Master Roister Doister will straight go home and die,  
 Our Lord Jesus Christ his soul have mercy upon!  
 Thus you see to-day a man, to-morrow John.

Yet saving for a woman's extreme cruelty,  
 He might have lived yet a month or two or three, 5  
 But in spite of Custance which hath him wearied,  
 His maship shall be worshipfully buried.  
 And while some piece of his soul is yet him within,  
 Some part of his funerals let us here begin.

*Dirige.* He will go darkling to his grave. 10  
*Neque lux, neque crux, nisi solum clink,*  
 Never gentman so went toward heaven, I think.

Yet, sirs, as ye will the bliss of heaven win,  
 When he cometh to the grave lay him softly in,  
 And all men take heed by this one gentleman, 15  
 How you set your love upon an unkind woman:  
 For these women be all such mad peevish elves,  
 They will not be won except it please themselves.  
 But in faith, Custance, if ever ye come in hell,  
 Master Roister Doister shall serve you as well. 20

Good night, Roger old knave; farewell, Roger old knave.

Good night, Roger old knave, knave, knap.

*Nequando. Audivi vocem. Requiem æternam.*

THE PEAL OF BELLS RUNG BY THE PARISH  
CLERK AND ROISTER DOISTER'S FOUR MEN.

*The first Bell a Triple.* When died he? When died he?

*The second.* We have him, we have him.

*The third.* Roister Doister, Roister Doister.

*The fourth Bell.* He cometh, he cometh.

*The great Bell.* Our own, our own.

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## NOTES

**Dramatis Personæ :** For the use of allusive names, see the note on i. 1. 17-26. The name **Harpax** is taken from the *Pseudolus*. Alyface, according to Flügel, indicates the color of Annot's nose and the desire of her heart. But she is undoubtedly intended to be young and good-looking, at least enough to win Ralph's approval.

**Prologue, 4 f.** Perhaps imitated from the prologue of the *Captivi*.

8 ff. A commonplace in early works on medicine.

15 ff. The doctrine, repeatedly affirmed by classical authors, that it is the mission of the poet to teach and to please, was seized upon, reinforced, and reiterated by Renaissance writers — in England, for example, by Stephen Hawes and in various works expounding or defending the art of poetry. The theme is treated (at greater length) in the *Prologue to Jack Juggler*, but the fact argues no basis for argument regarding indebtedness or priority.

20 : **bears the bell**. Act as bell-wethers or leaders of the flock. For the vogue of Plautus and Terence at the time of the play, see the Introduction. The form of the verb, with *s* though plural, frequently found in Standard English in the sixteenth century, is either Northern or a levelling from the singular.

22. Note the pairing of the familiar term *interlude* with the less familiar *comedy*.

i. 1 ff. Cf. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, v. 31 ff., Terence, *Eunuchus*, II, ii. 252 ff. [Flügel].

i. 1. 15 ff. The parasite in the *Asinaria* (v. 3) is quoted as having a long line of patrons with whom he may dine out.

i. 1. 17-26. Allusive names appear frequently in English works from the fourteenth century. Udall's use of them in his play may have been suggested by their general use in classical comedy. **Loytrer** has the obsolete sense of "time-waster, idler." **Titivile**, originally the name of an inferior devil of the miracle plays, had become a typical name for a worthless hanger-on. **Pye** suggested a chattering gossip, also a shrewd and cunning person ; **Blinkin-**

**soppe**, one who spends his time blinking into his glass ; **Hoddy-dodie**, various contemptuous meanings including one squat and dumpy, a simpleton and a cuckold.

i. 1. 38 : **Queen's peace**. Presumably changed from **King's** when the play was printed in Elizabeth's time. Cf. v. 6. 45 ff.

i. 1. 56. A proverbial expression for undertaking a risky venture.

i. 1. 66 : **for twenty pound**. "I would wager twenty pound on it."

i. 2. 2 : **you**. Merygreeke generally uses **ye**, **you** in ironical deference, Roister Doister the **thou**, **thee**, marking familiarity or social superiority to the person addressed.

i. 2. 14 : **thee**. Manly's emendation for **the**.

i. 2. 28-32. Cf. Terence, *Phormio*, i. 4. 210 f.

i. 2. 39. Cf. *Miles Gloriosus*, v. 1063.

i. 2. 41 : **But . . . matter**. Not assigned to Roister Doister in original text.

i. 2. 47 : **ye** emended from **he**.

i. 2 : **a**. Manly prints "(a!)" as if an interjection. Flügel explains the **a** as a preposition, the unstressed form of **ou**. The preferable view is that the line is a quotation from some old song, and the **a** merely expletive — as more often found at the end of the line, e.g., "your sad tires in a mile-a."

i. 2. 59. Apparently quoting Roister Doister as phrasing his feeling.

i. 2. 80. "Nay, 'unwise' [you may be] perhaps, but I warrant you against 'mad.'" *For*, in the sense of "against" appears with nouns, "for sight," "for drowning," "shelter for sun and wind" (see *N. E. D.*). Merygreeke's attention is fastened on the word Roister Doister uses.

i. 2. 97. A current proverbial saying; Heywood includes it in his *Proverbs*.

i. 2. 106-146. A similar list of heroic comparisons closely resembling Udall's occurs in the little school-dialogue of *Thersites* and has even caused the suggestion to be made that Udall was the author. The passage is modelled on the *Miles Gloriosus*, i. 1. 55-71. The only heroic comparison in the Latin comedy is contained in the words "'Is Achilles here?' says one to me. 'No,' says I, 'his brother is.'" But the passage concerning the admiration of the ladies for Udall is plainly a reminiscence of the Latin play.

i. 2. 118-129. Lancelot du Lake, Guy of Warwick, and Colbrande with whom Guy fought, are famous personages in well-known romances. The phrase "thirteenth Hercules brother" apparently means "the thirteenth brother of Hercules" (hence the apostrophe after Hercules in the text) in allusion to Hercules as one of the twelve children of Jupiter, though their number is sometimes stated as thirteen. "A brute of the Alie Land," that is "hero of the Holy Land," identifies Roister Doister with the many valiant warriors who fought against the Saracens in historic tradition and romance. The "nine worthies," as usually reckoned, include Hector, Alexander, and Cæsar from among "Paynims"; the Jewish heroes, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus; and the Christian heroes, Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Boulogne. The phrase "third Cato," in praise of Roister Doister's wisdom, in allusion to Cato the Censor and Cato of Utica, may have been suggested by the line of Juvenal (*Sat.* 2. 40) "Tertius e cælo cecidit Cato."

i. 2. 120. Cf. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 61: "hicine Achilles est? inquit mihi. Immo eius frater inquam."

i. 2. 135. Cf. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 65.

i. 2. 173: here added by Cooper.

i. 3. 51: **Pipe, merry Annot!** etc. Not an allusion to a song or its refrain as supposed by Flügel, followed by Williams and Robin, who refer to the mention of a song with this beginning or refrain in a poem *A Poore Helpe* (Hazlitt, *Early Popular Poetry*, 3. 260). Manly's view seems preferable that the etc. indicates that the line is to be filled out with a repetition except for substitution of the names of the two others — not, however, as he gives it "Pipe, Tibet; pipe, Margerie," but in full "Pipe, merry Tibet! pipe, merry Margerie." This and similar lines below seem to indicate that the song was sung as a catch or round.

i. 3. 71. "I care not if I let all alone." This use persisted into the seventeenth century.

i. 3. 116. Tibet does not finish her proverb, which is well known to her hearers.

i. 4. 12. "With his doting 'dear one, dainty one, take pity on me.'" **Nobs** and **nicebecetur** are sixteenth-century slang. Both are obscure in origin. Udall used the latter in his translation of the *Apophthegms* of Erasmus, 120 f. (cited by *N. E. D.*), "In suche did . . . the other nycibecetours or denty dames customably use . . . to bee carried about."

i. 4. 13. Flügel regards this episode as the reverse of Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, v. 1000 ff., where there is great difficulty in keeping the braggart captain from falling in love with a servant.

i. 4. 15. "I perceive now ye have chosen (made your choice) out of (from) devotion."

i. 4. 19. "I will not take charge of such a fair piece's keeping."

i. 4. 32. "Is not? Why then be it unsaid again!" See no in the Glossary.

i. 4. 45. The stage-directions which Manly inserts probably represent the incidental action correctly. Ralph's men crowd in to hear, and Merygreeke pushes them against him under pretence of getting them away, while Ralph pushes them back, producing an admirable confusion.

i. 4. 64-82. Merygreeke's description of the fictitious exploits of Roister Doister is modelled upon similar passages in the Latin comedies in which the parasite exalts the bravery of the braggart captain. Udall, as usual, gives an original form to what he borrows. Whether the exploits he particularizes are original inventions or borrowings from folk tales, it is difficult to say. Williams and Robin in their edition refer the killing of the blue spider in Blanchepowder land to Tom Thumb—on what authority is not specified; the term *blanchepowder*, applied to a mixture of spices used as a condiment or dessert dressing, makes plain the burlesque nature of the reference. The phrase "king of crickets" occurs elsewhere, but both it and the reference to Mumfision and the gosling in ll. 77, 78, are not yet explained. The conquest of the elephant is borrowed from the *Miles Gloriosus*, i. 1. 26:—

*Pyrgopolinices*. Where are you?

*Artotrogus*. Lo! here am I. I' troth in what a fashion it was you broke the fore-leg of even an elephant, in India, with your fist.

*Pyrgop*. How? — the fore-leg.

*Arto*. I mean to say this — the thigh.

*Pyrgop*. I struck the blow without an effort.

*Arto*. Troth, if, indeed, you had put forth your strength, your arm would have passed right through the hide, the entrails, and the frontispiece of the elephant.

The passage in general imitates, but with entire change of allusions, except for the elephant, the *Miles Gloriosus*, i. 1. 13-31, 42-54.

i. 4. 65. Probably the earliest extant use of dialect for humorous effect.

i. 4. 93. The same phrase as our "bee in one's bonnet"; that is a fixed idea, craze.

i. 4. 95-102. As the men kneel before him and Roister Doister is preoccupied with his grievance against them, Merygreeke, under pretence of zealous concern, brushes off the imaginary "fowl's feather," gnat, and hair, with decidedly unnecessary violence.

i. 4. 96 : **fowl's**. A pun on fool is intended, the two words being then pronounced alike : cf. l. 98. The same pun may perhaps be suggested in l. 900. Possibly also, as suggested by W. H. Williams, in l. 102, Merygreeke pretends to say "loose" to Ralph, but changes it to "lousy" for the audience.

i. 4. 103 : **famuli**, emended from **famulæ**.

i. 4. 112. The song here is presumably the "second song" appended to the play at the end.

i. 4. 127. Manly notes that the line might read, "But are you sure that your letter will win her," to provide a rime for **dinner**.

ii. 1. 28 : **Jack Raker**. A current name (perhaps derived by Udall from Skelton) for a bad rimester.

ii. 1. 30. Referring to the contest of Marsyas with Apollo.

ii. 2. 22. References to Lombard bankers, money-changers, and pawn-brokers, their similarity to Jews in their business dealings, and their habit of keeping to themselves, are frequent. A massacre of Lombard merchants was an incident of Jack Straw's rebellion. The "touch" or trait of the Lombards here referred to is persistency in getting the thing desired in any way right or wrong.

ii. 3. 8. The proverbial saying "in dock, out nettle," which originated in a charm to cure nettle-stings by dock-leaves, came to refer to changeableness and inconstancy (see the *N. E. D.*).

ii. 3. 47. As noted by Williams and Robin, dogs were frequently taught to dance.

ii. 3. 51. The Third Shepherd in the *Second Shepherds' Play* similarly refers to his decent parentage in claiming consideration, ll. 260 f.

ii. 3. 77. "No good turns, meant well, take in ill fashion."

ii. 3. 85-87. A conventional refrain (used also in *Thersites*). The *N. E. D.* explains *berry* as meaning a hillock or barrow; cf. William Browne, *Brit. Past.* i, ii. (1772), "Piping on thine oaten reede, upon this little berry (some ycleep A hillocke)."

ii. 4. 14 : **No**? emended from **No did**, to correct the rime.

iii. 2. 53. "I speed quite as much as though I did so — this time it shall not be necessary."

iii. 2. 90. A proverbial phrase included by Heywood in his *Proverbs*. The graphic image imagines a mischief-maker like the devil getting into a clock and playing the mischief with its delicate mechanism.

iii. 3. 8. Merygreeke pretends not to see him and runs into him violently.

iii. 3. 49. Merygreeke addresses Roister Doister as if he were a criminal about to die, and offers him the customary drink before execution (l. 51).

iii. 3. 52. "How feel ye your soul to God?" — that is, "What are you conscious of as to your soul in its relation to God?" Compare the phrase "How feel you yourself?" cited by Williams and Robin from Lyly's *Endimion* (ed. Fairholt, 71). The question, according to Flügel, is modelled upon the inquiry to the sick person in the office for the Visitation of the Sick.

iii. 3. 53 ff. : *ut infra*, "as below," refers to the *Psalmody* printed, together with the incidental songs of the play, at its close. The *Psalmody* is sometimes spoken of as if merely a variant or alternative version of the mock burial-service in the dialogue. This it is not; it is intended to indicate the portions to be chanted or intoned, and for that reason the direction *ut infra* is twice inserted — here and at l. 80 when Merygreeke calls forth the parish clerk who with the servants of Roister Doister sing the round of the *Peal of Bells* following the *Psalmody*.

In one passage, that beginning *Placebo dilexi*, the full text is given in the *Psalmody*, and the two lines in text of the play are a cue. The passage beginning *Dirige* is out of its proper order in the *Psalmody*. Verbal variations from the main text in this passage and in ll. 4-9, 13-20, are simply due to failure to insert corrections made in one into the other. Clear proof that the *Psalmody* indicates what is to be sung or intoned is afforded by the addition at its close of the single words and phrases from the requiem office scattered through the dialogue. Merygreeke chants these, breaking off to address Roister Doister. The portions in English were presumably intoned nasally in parody of the longer portions of the burial-service, whereas the Latin words were in plain song. The humorous effect of the intermingled chant and dialogue must have been very great.

Flügel notes in his appendix on this scene that this is one of

the latest instances of parodies of church services. These were very common in the Middle Ages ; see Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*. A number of mock requiems are extant in English. Flügel suggests that Udall's amusing scene may have been suggested by the *Placebo Dilexi* in Skelton's *Philip Sparrow*. For the passages from the Ritual used by Merygreeke in his medley, Flügel may be consulted. They are not necessary for an understanding of the scene.

iii. 3. 59. The candle and crucifix used in extreme unction, and the passing bell.

iii. 3. 64. In allusion to the distribution of doles, or alms, at funerals.

iii. 3. 79 f. These lines, from some song, are sung as the *Psalmody* shows. The word **knap** is in imitation of a sharp blow and here represents presumably the nailing of the coffin. After Merygreeke's speech, the "Peal of Bells," given at the close of the play, is sung as a round.

iii. 3. 117 ff. Merygreeke talks to Roister Doister as he would to a horse. Note the word **jet**, l. 121, used of the prancing gait of a lively horse, and the carrying out of the image in ll. 123, 124.

iii. 3. 128 : **All**, wholly, used as an intensive was often prefixed to verbs having the intensive prefix *to* ; hence was developed a compound intensive *all-too* prefixed to verbs which did not have *to*, especially those with the intensive prefix *be*. The sense of the line seems to be this : Merygreeke ironically answers Ralph in the line preceding, and then says aside, "May the Lord some day besmear or befoul you all over with deferential attention!"

iii. 3. 129. Merygreeke in the following passage takes occasion again to treat Ralph roughly under pretence of preserving his dignity.

iii. 3. 133. "To have an M. under one's girdle" was a proverbial phrase to express giving another the proper title demanded by civility or the respect due superior rank. Merygreeke omitted the title "Master," and Roister Doister reproves him. Hence, Merygreeke's speech which follows.

iii. 3. 135. "You would be snapped up for hawks' meat." So Williams and Robin who cite *Cambyeses* (Hazlitt-Dodsley, iv, 232), "That husband for hawks' meat of them is up snatched."

iii. 3. 142 : **trey ace**, three-one, in counting at dice, etc.

iii. 3. 150 : **Cantent**. Probably the "Fourth Song" at the close of the play.

iii. 4. 36. It was this famous letter — which can be made to read two ways with opposite sense (see the next scene, ll. 49 ff.) — that led to the discovery of Udall's authorship through its use by Wilson as an example of ambiguity (see the Introduction, pp. 31 ff.). The punctuation here used is designed as a help in reading it aloud. Flügel cites parallels of poems intended to be read two ways, one of which is reprinted in his *Lesebuch*, p. 39, and the other in Ebert's *Jahrbuch*, 14. 214.

iii. 4. 72: **By the arms of Calais.** The oath here used, and used also in act iv. 7. 48, may possibly have been derived by Udall from Skelton (*Magnificence*, 685, *Bowge of Court*, 398). It has never been satisfactorily explained. **Caleys** is almost certainly Calais in France, but the explanation that the "arms" referred to were the arms and ordnance kept there by England and lost when Calais was lost in 1558 is impossible in view of Skelton's use of the oath. The explanation suggested in Hales's article, already treated in the Introduction, is also impossible.

iii. 4. 99. Merygreeke's articulation is affected by his emotion. **Lub**, however, is a regular variant of **love**.

iii. 4. 119–124. Cf. *Miles Gloriosus*, 4. 5. 1233–1238; also Terence, *Eunuchus*, iv. 7. 41–43. And compare above in Udall, ll. 93 f.

iii. 5. 7. "I wish you had, too, but it was not necessary, that time."

iii. 5. 29. The Scrivener shows a proper spirit and strikes Ralph, who instantly betrays his cowardice.

iii. 5. 43. Apparently, as Flügel notes, Ralph had gotten back his letter from Custance.

iv. 2. 14. Custance's elaborate oath looks very strange to modern eyes. To understand it, one must first recall the common medieval practice of particularizing parts of the body, — head, limbs, teeth, beard, lips, hips, etc. — in oaths and asseverations. "To curse (one's) cheeks" is reinforced by "best" (compare v. 4. 28), becoming "to curse (one's) best cheeks," and here this already formidable execration is still further strengthened by adding "Christmas" to "best," as if "their best, even their Christmas, cheeks."

iv. 3. 12 f. This repetition of ll. 6, 7, can hardly be intentional. Probably a printer's error.

iv. 3. 14–23. Cf. *Miles Gloriosus*, i. 1. 1–9 (Riley's translation): "Take ye care that the lustre of my shield is more bright than the rays of the sun are wont to be at the time when the sky is clear; that when occasion comes, the battle being joined, 'mid



the fierce ranks right opposite it may dazzle the eyesight of the enemy. But I wish to console this sabre of mine that it may not lament nor be down cast in spirits, because I have thus long been wearing it keeping holiday, which so longs right dreadfully to be making havoc of the enemy."

iv. 3. 40. Custance is unluckily equivocal — she means "nothing less likely."

iv. 3. 59. Note that as Custance grows more angry she uses **thee** and **thou** to indicate her anger and contempt.

iv. 3. 89. Roister Doister begins to threaten.

iv. 3. 100: **fire**. See Glossary. This use of "fire" is periodically discovered as an early instance of the American slang use. The line is defective as regards rime.

iv. 3. 117. Ralph, as he grows angry, turns to **thee** and **thou**.

iv. 3. 121. "And thrash thee (with) mine own hands."

iv. 3. 123. "I still have a perfectly clear notion whether I shall be beaten." The phrase seems blind to-day because of the use of **see**, in the sense "perceive, see as a mental conclusion," which is still in use, but in a more restricted application ("to see the point," "I don't see it"). Ralph is really shaken by Custance's valorous threats, hence the word **still**.

iv. 3. 127. A fight between Custance and Ralph evidently takes place, in which Ralph is worsted and retreats.

iv. 6. 10 f. The speakers' names are erroneously reversed in the original text (Flügel).

iv. 6. 39: **Cotswold lion**. A humorous term for a sheep; so also "Essex lion," "Lammermoor lion." See above, l. 29.

iv. 7. 60: **collocavit** is apparently a burlesque term for some kitchen utensil (it is apparently a nonce-word; see *N. E. D.*), but just what utensil can only be conjectured. If Williams and Robin are right in assuming a verb *grease*, to fatten, and the rest of the line, as seems likely, means "[used] the best hens to fatten" (not as W. and R. suggest "the best thing to fatten hens"), the *Collocavit* might be the garbage-pail (i.e., a *collock*, or large pail, the word being punningly identified with the perfect of *collocare*, as a collecting-place), into which scraps were thrown to be given to the hens set apart as best for fattening (cf. the phrase "hen of grease," a fat hen: see *N. E. D.*, *s. v.* hen). The reference to hens and to fattening would, as Williams and Robin point out, be peculiarly applicable to Roister Doister, owing to the proverbial application of the word *hen* to a coward,

and as suggesting Roister Doister's love of eating referred to just above. The suggestion that the latter half of the line might mean "the best hence to Greece," a phrase found in variant form elsewhere, is not impossible, but the interpretation just given seems preferable.

iv. 7. 86: **her misdemeanour**. The use of libelous language.

iv. 7. 102. In the original text this line is assigned to Ralph, and the next speech to Trustie (Flügel).

iv. 8. 1 ff. This scene was formerly said to be a close imitation of the *Miles Gloriosus*, v. 1. Maulsby shows that the two scenes are essentially different, and that much closer parallels are afforded by *Rudens*, 3. 5., when two women defend themselves with cudgels from being carried away, and the *Eunuchus* of Terence, where the boastful captain of the play, Thraso, attempts to carry off Pamphila. In fact, Udall is not imitating any special scene, but working freely on a complex suggestion.

iv. 8. 14: **thou**. Emended from **you**, a misprint or with **y** for **th**.

iv. 8. 40. Cf. iii. 4. 127. The oath may be variously completed.

iv. 8. 45: **our ladies' knight**, a title of St. George, probably in reference to his being the patron saint of Chivalry.

iv. 8. 53: **be thy priest**, that is, "slay you as a sacrifice, be thy death."

v. 1. 10. Cf. *Miles Gloriosus*, 957.

v. 5. 1 ff. Compare Terence, *Eunuchus*, last scene.

v. 6. 44. Flügel is doubtless right in believing that the song is not given, and that the remainder of the play is the conventional prayer said kneeling for the sovereign's majesty and the estates of the realm, found in numerous other plays. It cannot be certain, though it is highly probable, that the Queen referred to is Elizabeth and that the prayer was added during her reign, perhaps by the printer. Flügel regards this as certain because of l. 52, but this line without much straining might apply to Mary as "Defender of the Faith," or Udall might even have had in mind Mary's collaboration on the translation of the *Commentary*. But it is much more probable that Elizabeth is intended.

**The Second Song**. This belongs presumably at i. 4. 112.

**The Fourth Song**. This belongs presumably at iii. 3. 150.

**The Psalmody**. See iii. 3. 53, note.

**The Peal of Bells**. This belongs at iii. 3. 84.

# GLOSSARY

## A

- a, on, Fourth Song, 1.  
a-good, in good fashion, thoroughly, iii. 4. 149.  
abye, suffer (for it), ii. 4. 21.  
a-crook, awry, iv. 3. 31.  
advoutress, adulteress, v. 3. 9.  
again, furthermore, iii. 2. 48.  
Alie, Holy (with pun on *ale*?), i. 2. 124.  
allow, approve, v. 1. 12.  
all-too, altogether, entirely; see Note, iii. 3. 128.  
altogether, for, for finally, for good, iv. 6. 3.  
and, if, *passim*.  
apply, take into consideration, iv. 6. 47.  
appose, pose, make it difficult for (a person) to find a reply,  
i. 1. 14.  
argent, silver, i. 4. 48.  
arms, by His, i.e., by God's arms, that is, by God's might: one  
of many oaths of similar type, i. 2. 51.  
assays, at all, at every test, hence at every time; here, with  
ellipsis, ready for anything, ii. 3. 55.  
avow, solemn promise, avowal, i. 2. 98.

## B

- backare (Qy. "*back there*," or *backer*, quasi-comp. of *back*;  
see *N. E. D.*), back! stand back.  
bare, scanty, poorly provided, i. 4. 50.  
baware, almost certainly a misprint for *beware*, iii. 3. 21.  
begrime, see Note, iii. 3. 126.  
berry, see Note, ii. 3. 87.  
beshrew, invoke curses on, i. 3. 4.  
bet, beat (preterit), i. 4. 73.  
bie, pay for, expiate, iv. 7. 27.  
biliment (abbreviated form of *habiliment*), a jewelled front  
worn on ladies' head-dresses in the 16th century (so worn  
with the French hoods referred to in l. 41), ii. 3. 43.  
bold, sure, i. 4. 80.  
bord, jest, i. 4. 8.

- borrow, pledge; used in asseverations as here, "St. George  
 be my pledge," iv. 7. 74.  
 bow, yield, iii. 3. 98.  
 brag, arrogant and ostentatious demeanor, iii. 3. 113.  
 brim, fierce, iv. 6. 5.  
 burbolt, bird-bolt, a blunt-headed bolt or arrow for shooting  
 small birds, iii. 2. 88.  
 busk, bush, clump, i. 4. 67.  
 but, unless, ii. 2. 19; however, i. 3. 11.  
 but and, but if, except, i. 3. 119.  
 by and by, forthwith, at once, i. 3. 48.

## C

- Caleys, see Note, iii. 4. 72.  
 can, knows, i. 3. 85.  
 carriage, burden, iii. 2. 36.  
 cassock, a long loose outer-coat, ii. 3. 42.  
 cast, think, i. 2. 167; planned, iii. 3. 86.  
 cast, show a, show an example, "give a taste," of (your qual-  
 ity), i. 2. 181.  
 chad, Southern abbreviation of *ich had*, I had, i. 3. 99.  
 change, of, for change, provided to use in alternation, ii. 3. 44.  
 charm, fig. a spell (against doing the like again), ii. 2. 4.  
 charm, put under a spell; fig. overpower, subdue, iv. 3. 117.  
 chieve, succeed; *ill chieve it*, ill may it fare (with her), bad luck  
 to her, i. 3. 98.  
 choploge, chop-logic, one who splits hairs or quibbles; hence,  
 a great talker, iii. 2. 82.  
 chwas, Southern abbreviation of *ich was*, I was, i. 3. 100.  
 chwine, Southern abbreviation of *ich ween*, I ween, i. 3. 100.  
 clink, ringing sound (here of the bell rung before the funeral  
 train), iii. 3. 59.  
 clout, rag: used contemptuously.  
 clout, rag, ii. 1. 43.  
 Cock, minced form of the name of the Deity used in oaths,  
 i. 2. 160.  
 coil, thrash, iv. 3. 121.  
 collocavit, see Note, iv. 7. 60.  
 command, commend, i. 3. 126.  
 commonty, commonalty, v. 6. 58.  
 contented, willing, satisfied, iii. 2. 45.  
 cote, colt, iii. 3. 117.  
 cough me a mome, make a fool of, prove (one) a fool, iii.  
 2. 86.

- cousin, kinsman; also used in addressing or referring to one not a kinsman, like our "friend," iii. 1. 4.  
 craking, boasting, i. 1. 35.  
 cust, kissed, i. 3. 98.  
 custreling, diminutive of *custrel*, groom, knave, i. 4. 77.

## D

- default, fault, iii. 5. 84.  
 despite, contempt, scorn, iii. 4. 75.  
 device, in my, in my hands to devise what I will, in my control, iii. 3. 1.  
 doing, to, for doing, to do, iii. 1. 1.  
 doing, action, i. 5. 3.  
 dole, alms (here, as given at funerals), iii. 3. 64.  
 dotage, doting; uncontrolled or foolish love, iii. 2. 38.  
 dreadfully, as one full of dread, iv. 6. 47.  
 drink, fig. drink of sorrow, suffer pain or punishment (cf. "taste of sorrow"), i. 3. 27.  
 dump, a sad or plaintive song, ii. 1. 21.

## E

- entwite, reproach, comment angrily on, ii. 3. 77.

## F

- facing, playing the braggart and bully, i. 1. 35.  
 fact, notable deed, exploit, i. 2. 144.  
 fain, gladly, eagerly, iv. 3. 93.  
 ferdegew, farthingale or hooped petticoat to extend the skirt, ii. 3. 43.  
 fet, fetch, iii. 3. 92.  
 fickle, treacherous, unreliable, iii. 5. 4.  
 fire, to drive (out) by use of fire; fig. to eject by violence, iv. 3. 10.  
 fire-fork, a fork used for tending the fire, iv. 4. 21.  
 fit, strain of music, "bar or two," ii. 3. 54.  
 fling, go with haste or violence; here, go about with heedless haste, ii. 3. 27.  
 flock, flout, mock, iii. 3. 33.  
 foil, defile, v. 6. 28.  
 fond, foolish, i. 1. 51; foolishly affectionate, doting, i. 4. 12.  
 force, no, no matter, iv. 3. 96.  
 for why, because, v. 6. 8.

found, met with, iv. 3. 3.  
 frame, make progress, get on, i. 2. 186.  
 fur, furrow, i. 3. 12.

## G

gauding, merrymaking, iii. 4. 1.  
 gear, matter, concern, i. 3. 21.  
 gill, wench, iii. 4. 105.  
 gittern, an instrument like a guitar, ii. 1. 25.  
 gloming, gloomy looks, i. 1. 66.  
 Gogs arms, a minced form of the oath "God's arms," i. 4. 28.  
 Goss, minced name of the Deity used in oaths, iii. 4. 91.  
 graff, graft, i. 1. 34.  
 gramercies, pl. of *gramercy*, thanks, i. 2. 27.  
 grant, agree, iv. 6. 47.  
 gristle, a young girl in contrast with a matron, i. 4. 24.  
 grutch, complain, iv. 5. 20.

## H

hand, for my, for my own part, for myself, iii. 2. 71.  
 hard, very: used intensively in a sense akin to the adverb in  
 "hard at it"; so similarly "hard heels," i. 1. 40.  
 hardily, boldly, openly, iv. 3. 41; assuredly, iii. 4. 149  
 hardly, surely, forsooth, i. 2. 175.  
 harquebouse, arquebus, iv. 7. 110.  
 ha'ze, have us, iii. 4. 7.  
 heal, health, iii. 3. 84.  
 heat, fig. angry passion; *in that heat*, in such a rage, i. 2. 50.  
 hereaway, hereabouts, i. 3. 88.  
 hoball, stupid fool, iii. 3. 18.  
 homely, rough, rude, unbecoming, v. 2. 24.  
 honesty, honor, respect, iv. 3. 63.  
 hood, French, a hood worn in the 16th and 17th centuries  
 "having the front band depressed over the forehead and  
 raised in folds or loops over the temples" (*N. E. D.*), ii. 3. 41.  
 hoop, whoop, ii. 1. 24.  
 horologe, clock, iii. 2. 90.  
 howlet, owl, ii. 1. 24.  
 husband, manager, i. 3. 91.

## I

ichotte, Southern abbreviation of *ich wot*, I know, i. 3. 99.  
 imagination, mental conception on judgment from the facts,  
 inference, iii. 2. 74.

in, on, i. 3. 57.

insurance, betrothal, iv. 6. 14.

jet, strut, prance, iii. 3. 121.

joyly, of happy disposition, gay and gallant, i. 5. 10.

just, decided, settled (of a fact asserted as true), iii. 4. 60.

jut, jolt, shock, iii. 3. 8.

## K

ka (abbreviation of *quotha*, "quoth he"), indeed: used in sarcasm or contempt, i. 2. 111.

kite, the name of the bird used as a term of reproach, v. 5. 9.

knacking, "thumping," downright, iii. 2. 58.

knot, group of persons, ii. 3. 53.

know, become acquainted, ii. 3. 35.

ko, quoth, iii. 3. 21.

## L

lade, burden, oppress, iii. 2. 36.

land, estate, iii. 4. 115.

last day, yesterday, i. 3. 129.

law, an interjection expressing surprise or amazement, i. 4. 65.

lese, lose, i. 1. 53.

lewd, ignorant, low, base, iv. 3. 1.

light, by this, a common oath, iii. 4. 76.

lilburn, lubber, iii. 3. 18.

lily, fair as a lily, iv. 7. 34.

lobcock, oaf, lout, iii. 3. 18.

losel, profligate, scoundrel, iv. 3. 90.

lout, flout, jeer at, iii. 3. 25.

lout, fraud, i. 1. 34.

lover, would-be gallant (with evil implication), iii. 3. 27.

low, allow, iii. 3. 143.

lub, variant of *love*, i. 2. 146.

lust, list, please, i. 1. 55.

## M

M., for "Master," iii. 3. 133.

maistry, for the, as if for the mastery, to your utmost best, i. 3. 68.

make, prepare as food, cook, i. 4. 82.

Malkin, a diminutive of *Malde* (whence *Maude*), nickname of *Matilda*; here used as an oath or asseveration, perhaps because associated with *Mary*, as if *Molkin*, i. 2. 114.

- mankine**, of savage temper; uncontrollably fierce or mad, iv. 8. 41.
- marybones**, marrowbones, i. 4. 90.
- maship**, abbreviation of *mastership* corresponding to *mas* for *master*, i. 2. 100.
- Matte**, minced form of *Mass* used in oaths, iv. 7. 114.
- meddle you**, busy yourself, i. 3. 10.
- meetly**, properly, or, perhaps, fairly, tolerably, iii. 4. 21.
- mind**, but for your, except for your wish or judgment, unless it is your wish or decision, v. 5. 16.
- minion**, darling; also, as adj., dainty, Second Song, 1.
- minion**, paramour (like "lover" above), iii. 3. 30.
- mo**, more, iii. 2. 7.
- mock**, speech or action expressing scorn or derision, ii. 1. 42.
- mock**, make, i. 4. 18.
- mome**, blockhead, fool (see *cough*), iii. 2. 86.
- more and less**, high and low, Prol. 11.
- moss**, humorous for "turf" or "earth," ii. 3. 45.
- mote**, may, iii. 2. 78.
- Mounsire**, Anglicized form of *Monsieur*, iv. 8. 26.
- mystery**, hidden meaning, Prol. 18.

## N

- ne**, nor, i. 4. 30.
- near**, nearer, i. 2. 88.
- nicebecetur** (a humorous quasi-Latinized form of *nicebice* (cf. *Locrine*, 3. 3 as pointed out by W. H. Williams) of same sense), "dainty dame," fine lady, i. 4. 12.
- no** (Southern form of O. E. *nā*, not), not: in "No is!" "No did!" (so similarly "No will!" etc.) expressing surprise at a statement made, where the modern idiom is "Is not!", "Did not!", etc., i. 4. 31.
- nobs**, dear, darling, i. 4. 12.
- nones**, for the, for one, or for a, particular occasion, i. 3. 15.
- nouns**, a minced or humorous variation of "wounds" used in oaths, i. 4. 23.
- nown**, own, i. 1. 49.

## P

- parage**, lineage, i. 2. 37.
- pashe**, assumed to be an abbreviation of *passion*; used in oaths, iv. 3. 124.
- pastance**, pastime, ii. 1. 42.
- pattens**, thick-soled shoes worn to increase the height; *run on pattens*, make a great clatter, i. 3. 24.



- pick, "take" ("take yourself off"), iv. 3. 90.  
 pigsney (by derivation *pigges neye*, pig's eye, used with reference to its small size, like *pinke-nye*, tiny eye, as a term of endearment: see *N. E. D.*), darling, pet, i. 4. 42.  
 place, in, on the spot, at hand, i. 4. 72.  
 plain, surely, iii. 3. 90.  
 plight, plighted, iii. 1. 10.  
 portly, stately, iii. 3. 113.  
 potgun, properly a gun with a large bore, a mortar, also a pop-gun; also applied humorously, as here, with reference to any gun, iv. 7. 62.  
 powder, preserve (meat) by sprinkling it with salt or spices; cure; here, "salt medium," ii. 4. 22.  
 pranky, full of pranks, frisky, iii. 3. 117.  
 prick-me-dainty, one who gives much attention to dress, one who dresses elaborately, ii. 3. 48.

## Q

- quite, quits, ii. 3. 79.

## R

- rag, fig. bit, scrap, with contemptuous implication, iv. 3. 81.  
 rate, manner (so similarly "at one rate," "in like manner"), iii. 2. 34.  
 ray, array, iv. 7. 1.  
 recorder, an instrument resembling a flute or flageolet, ii. 1. 23.  
 renne, run, i. 3. 24.  
 reprief, reproof, v. 4. 20.  
 resort, go or come (*to* a place or person): here absol. for "come to her," ii. 3. 37.  
 Rig, a name frequently given dogs, ii. 3. 47.  
 roil, gad about, ii. 3. 29.  
 roisting, playing the roisterer, Prol. 25.  
 roose, extol, flatter, i. 1. 50.  
 round, whisper, i. 4. 11.  
 rout, form in a company, gather, iv. 7. 2.

## S

- sadness, seriousness, iv. 3. 5.  
 said saw, saying that has verbal currency, proverb, i. 1. 5.  
 say, essay, try, iii. 1. 1.  
 sectour, executor, iii. 3. 61.  
 see, guard, protect, ii. 2. 5.

- seek to, "make up to," i. 5. 3.  
 sence, since, since then, already, iii. 5. 5.  
 shent, injured, disgraced, i. 2. 46.  
 shoke up, found fault with, sharply rebuked, ii. 2. 1.  
 shoot-anchor, sheet-anchor, the largest anchor and hence, fig.  
     main or final reliance, i. 1. 28.  
 shrew, curse, i. 3. 48.  
 skill, get along (with), succeed or manage (with), ii. 3. 7.  
 skrine, shrine, chest, box, iv. 7. 64.  
 slacked, proved remiss, ii. 1. 14.  
 sonnet, here, a poem to a lady set for singing, ii. 1. 21.  
 sooth, give assent to, corroborate with flattering intent, i. 1. 9.  
 sore, fearsome, i. 4. 75.  
 sound, swoon, iii. 3. 93.  
 sprite, spirit, demon, iv. 8. 25.  
 stale, matured, seasoned, i. 3. 2.  
 start, started, i. 4. 64.  
 stop, obstacle, hindrance, i. 3. 64.  
 stound, time, occasion, iii. 5. 7.  
 such other, others like them, Prol. 21.  
 swing, used of restless and heedless movement, ii. 3. 28.  
 swinge, beat soundly, ii. 4. 27.

## T

- take, give in charge, entrust, i. 5. 1.  
 target, a light round shield, iv. 3. 14.  
 tender, cherish, iv. 1. 18.  
 think long, await, or look for, eagerly, iv. 1. 20.  
 took, gave, i. 5. 1.  
 touch, trait, quality, ii. 2. 22.  
 trace, track, iii. 1. 1.  
 trey-ace, see Note, iii. 3. 142.  
 trick, neat, trim, ii. 3. 43.  
 trust, expect, ii. 1. 6.  
 try, give trial of, v. 1. 8.  
 tut-a-whistle, how now, what do you mean, nonsense; so, simi-  
     larly, "tut-a-fig's end." i. 4. 23.  
 tway, two, iv. 22.

## U

- uneth, hardly, iii. 5. 4.

- very now, right now, at once, iv. 6. 40.

## W

- wagpasty, idle scamp, iii. 2. 10.  
wark, work, iii. 1. 6.  
warrantise, guarantee, iv. 7. 26.  
wast, waste; *in wast*, in vain, iv. 5. 22.  
week, in by the, launched in his foolish fancies for an indefinite time, i. 1. 24.  
whan, a little, iii. 3. 117.  
whippet, make haste, i. 3. 68.  
whirl, a disk of some weight attached to the spindle to make it spin with greater force and steadiness, i. 3. 10.  
white son, favored dependent, parasite (cf. *white*, v. to wheedle, flatter, and *white boy* in similar use), i. 1. 49.  
whur, haste, hurry, i. 3. 11.  
wide, wide of the mark, i. 4. 28.  
wise, in any, in any case, i. 2. 61.  
worm, lover, iii. 2. 48.  
write, writ, writing, ii. 3. 74.

## Y

- yelde, reward, i. 3. 99.  
yield, requite, iii. 2. 51.

## Z

- zembletee, dialectal corruption of *semblant*, *semblaunty*, seeming; *by zembletee*, in seeming, so it would seem (cf. O.F. *par semblant*), i. 4. 75.

